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## Letter From The Editor

ON THE COVER, we have a picture of a group of men and women, self-employed in the retail fish trade, waiting for the catamarans and mechanised fishing boats to come in with the day's catch. In recent times, the catches have been less and less, and even if there was a good catch there was no ice to preserve the fish for marketing. On March 18, *Tribune* had raised questions about the shortage of fish and the exorbitant prices demanded and had suggested that our fish was being smuggled to foreign markets. We had also specifically asked whether Corporation's trawlers and tuna boats had been leased to foreign entrepreneurs (this question has not been answered yet). It was only after this that the Chairman of the Fisheries Corporation (and later the Minister of Fisheries himself) began a series of press conferences and interviews to the daily press (*Tribune* was not notified or invited to any of them) to explain that the fish in our territorial waters had been sold on a royalty basis to foreign trawling companies which were expected to sell 40% of the catch to the Fisheries Corporation. In our issue of March 25, we had pointed out the dangers in such a scheme. The Minister of Fisheries had thereafter come into the scene and preached his Gospel for the salvation of the fishing industry in the daily press which has not, so far, examined his propositions in a critical way. The first of such Ministerial pronouncements had come in the *Sun* of March 21, and in our issue of April 1 we had pointed out that the scheme was an open invitation to corruption. The *Sun*, however, did not play up this story. Thereafter, the *Sunday Observer* was dragooned into spreading a big, front-page banner headline to proclaim that in a bid to provide cheaper fish foreign fishing fleets would be permitted to operate on licences in our territorial waters and maritime zone. The Minister outlined the scheme in detail: that foreign licence-holders were expected to operate outside a 25-mile limit which was "strictly reserved" for local fishermen: that 40% of their catch of varieties selected by the Corporation would be sold to Sri Lanka, but at what prices? But more important is the question as to how this 25-mile limit is to be determined? Will the Minister float marking buoys to mark the 25-mile limit all round the island? Does the Fisheries Corporation have the means to check whether the foreign licencees comply with this rule? Or does the Fisheries Corporation want the government to stretch the meagre resources of the Navy to have an eye on their foreign fishing trawlers? Does the Navy have the vessels to cover the entire coast? The *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily News* and the *Observer* carried similar stories about the benefits that will accrue to Sri Lanka by permitting foreign trawlers to operate on these terms in our territorial waters. But did any one of these papers raise even a single question about the fate and future of local fishermen who will find that the bulk of the fish that should come into the 25-mile limit is caught by modern trawlers fitted with sonar and electronic devices to detect (and even attract) fish outside or inside the 25-mile stretch? What is there to prevent such trawlers exercising the right of "hot pursuit" to chase fish they detect outside the limit into areas reserved for local fishermen? With the licensed invasion of our territorial waters by foreign fishing companies, local fishermen will soon go out of business. And, what is the guarantee that fish will become cheaper? What is there to prevent the foreign companies from ganging up and dictating prices to the Fisheries Corporation? Minister Festus Perera continues to speak of the corruption and waste under the old regime, but the common man is deeply conscious that in the "bad old days" there was more fish at cheaper prices. Now, there is no fish, and prices are sky-high. The public are asked to wait until foreign fishing fleets come to our rescue? Is this not an admission of gross incompetence? Is it not ministerial inability to mobilise local fishermen to rise up to the occasion? Must we contract with Chinese labour, for instance, to complete our accelerated Mahaweli program in five years?

# TRIBUNE

Ceylon News Review

Founded in 1954

**A Journal of Ceylon and  
World Affairs**

**Editor S. P. Amarasingam  
Every Saturday**

April 8, 1978

Vol. 22 No. 42

TRIBUNE

43, DAWSON STREET,  
COLOMBO - 2.

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## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

# 250 Days

Colombo, April 4.

Two hundred and fifty days have gone by since the UNP government came to power: that is, a little over eight months. In two weeks, it will be nine months. It is two months since the presidential system was inaugurated on February 4. It would be appropriate to take stock of what the government has achieved, and what it has not, in this period.

*Tribune* had indulged in such an exercise ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY DAYS AFTER in its issue of January 7, 1978. Our finding at that time was a little grim and pessimistic. And, we did not hesitate to say so: that we were disappointed with the performance of the government, and that we were disappointed with the work of several ministers.

*Today, two hundred and fifty days after, the situation is better. A few silver linings have begun to appear on the horizon: some of the darkest and heaviest clouds have begun to disperse. But, there is so much more to be done (and undone): that it will take a long time for this government (or any government for that matter) to get the country out of the morass it has fallen.*

In January, the government was afflicted with an uncertainty about liquidity and foreign exchange to get the economy back on the rails of growth and development. The IMF-IBRD, after the initial \$ 93m stand-by last October, had started making its investigations to see whether the \$ 300 million Sri Lanka needed to reach out to viability should be granted in a second IMF stand-by. These investigations went on until the beginning of March and it was only after the

Hopper visit in mid March that the green signal was given. Now, the government is assured of the second-stand by over \$ 300 million to make up the Rs. 5000 to Rs. 6000 million it needs to get its capitalist feet well and firmly fixed on the ground.

In addition, Sri Lanka is assured of capital on a bilateral basis for all the projects it can possibly undertake. This is a major achievement. It is not easy to persuade the hard-nosed capitalists of the West to agree to underwrite a "mixed economy" like Sri Lanka's by raising slogans to glorify capitalism and the West. Sri Lanka has not raised such slogans. The UNP government persists in calling itself socialist—we are now the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The West, furthermore, is no longer inhibited against socialism or the Comecon—except in the higher regions of political, military and cold war confrontations. The rich West now lend to the East, and Comecon countries have borrowed freely from the West.

It is surprising that the West should be willing to lend to a country like Sri Lanka which has a mixed economy with a large public sector. Even if the intention is to check the growth of a further movement towards socialism and to encourage private enterprise and capitalism (with multi-nationals thrown in), the fact that the IMF-IBRD decided to lend so massively to the Sri Lanka government is a tribute to the skill of the President and his team in presenting the Sri Lanka case effectively and in a convincing manner. The last government too had tried very hard to get IMF endorsement, but had failed. The IMF, moreover, has been willing to grant important concessions to this government in regard to the cutting down of subsidies in well-timed stages in a flexible manner—something which neither the LSSP

nor the SLFP ministers of the last government were able to get from the IMF in spite of trying, and even discreet kow-towing.

*This financial backing is a bed-rock for development. It could not have come from any other source at this juncture. It is now up to the government to use it to effect an economic break through into growth.*

The Jayawardene government has not shown any die-hard ideological affiliations or inhibitions.

### TRIBUNE

There will be no issue of *Tribune* next week, i.e., Saturday, 15th April. With the Sinhala and Tamil New Year holidays on April 13 and 14, there will be the usual shutdown of all activity (in spite of protests from all production-minded persons and papers like *Tribune*) for a week to ten days. We, therefore, decided to make the issues of the 8th and 22nd bigger and skip the intervening issue on the 15th.

Owing to complaints from a large number of readers that *Tribune* was too closely printed in small type, we have made significant changes in the layout of the pages in recent issues making reading easier on the eye. Although we lose about 15% to 20% of reading matter in each issue of 24 pages, we have decided to stick to the new spacing after getting the views of our readers. We hope, however, to increase our pages, to provide our readers with adequate reading material. If our plans come right we hope to have many more pages than ever before with a variety of additional features.

## Constraints Still Impede

It has made a virtue and a philosophy of pragmatic realism. There has been no attempt to de-nationalise "nationalised" public sector undertakings. Many public sector undertakings have been placed under private sector managerial agency firms in the belief that such management would ensure greater efficiency. It is true that the private sector will have the right to start enterprises in sectors reserved for the public sector earlier in order to offer competition so that the consumers have a better deal. This is still something to be done in the future, but for the present the government has concentrated on attempts to put Corporations and public sector organisations into order.

In a number of cases, there have been significant improvements. But in some Corporations the situation has deteriorated very badly. Others like the National Paper Corporation, which had functioned well earlier, came in for bouts of severe criticism. A review of the functioning of these Corporations will be undertaken by *Tribune* shortly to evaluate their work, progress or shortcomings.

One of the most significant achievements of the government is that it has been able to make all essentials available to consumers at prices that must be considered reasonable in the context of the devaluation. Until the level of wages also increases consistent with the devaluation there will be hardships among certain sections of the public. With increased employment—on a conservative estimate over a lakh, of young people have found employment since this government came to power—price increases will tend to equate to wage levels and present disparities will tend to diminish, and slowly disappear.

It must be mentioned that there is a conscious and deliberate attempt by the government to see that

imports of chillies, matches, onions will not deter local domestic production. In this matter, greater care and consideration must be paid than what bureaucrats are normally inclined to give to such ad hoc temporary imports to meet seasonal shortages.

The prices of vegetables have been brought down in a season when prices have soared in the past, and the indications are that the government will be able to hold the price line. Meat prices are high and supplies are short, but there is nothing the government can do immediately. Sri Lanka's livestock industry was ruined by the stupid way Land Reform was implemented and it will be years before meat and dairy produce can be normalised again. Inexplicably, the supply of fish has diminished in the last few months and prices have risen to dizzy heights. The sell-out of our deep seas to foreign trawlers for scandalously low royalty payments in exchange for a hard-to-determine 40% of the catch in an area outside an impossible-to-define 25 mile limit is something that must be examined and reviewed by government.

Presidential action has made the port of Colombo function properly. Similar action is needed to make the CTB and CGR to provide a decent service. The 2000 new buses and the new locomotives, passenger coaches and waggons cannot by themselves bring improvement. Those who man the CTB and CGR from the top to the bottom must be persuaded to pull their weight.

The silver linings that have appeared have brought an element of hope, but there is a great question mark that hangs over everything and everyone. The UNP came to power mainly because of the faith a large section of the public had in J. R. Jayawardene. The UNP also came to power on the promise that the constraints that impeded

growth and development would be removed—no matter whether the constraints stemmed from bureaucracy, inefficiency, corruption, political interference or party jobbery. A very large section of UNP adherents are disappointed that these constraints still remain. Bureaucrats still run amok, the inefficient and the corrupt still seem to rule supreme, political interference is still rampant and party jobbery has reared its head in a big way.

These UNPers feel that unless Mr. J. R. Jayawardene steps out to liquidate these constraints immediately and effectively, the Opposition parties would be able to make capital of the shortcomings that are inevitable in any developing country. The President cannot delay action to remove these constraints much longer. A certain amount of ruthless action—even if it means the re-shuffling of the Cabinet—has become the most urgent need of the day.

Concluding this note, it must be mentioned that many members of this government, as we have mentioned in earlier issues in *Tribune*, are responsive to criticism. This is in marked contrast to what it was in the past. Except for one or two Ministers who turn their faces away and pretend that criticisms have not been made, most Ministers respond to criticism in a healthy manner and are anxious to establish a dialogue with the critic and also endeavour to remove the shortcomings which had given rise to the criticism. If the criticisms are illfounded or are based on inconclusive data, information is made available. This is a departure from the past.

The only pity is that two large groups of newspapers, *Lake House* and the *Times* are government owned and government-controlled

and any attempt by journalists in these two undertakings to adopt critical attitudes or expose scandals are usually overwhelmed by the bureaucrats, official, party or the advertiser's lobby. Recantations have become the order of the day.

*The President, if he wants to encourage the development of a free press, must emancipate the Lake House and the Times from constraints that make them appear to be a "kept" and "managed" press.*



## BETWEEN THE LINES

BY SERENDIB

### ● Higher Education

### ● Foreign Affairs

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: Ever since 1957/58 when higher education was debased by the cheap demagogic gimmickry of W. Dahanayake to extend university education to segments that were not schooled enough for such learning and also without the necessary facilities to cope with massive admissions, university education in Sri Lanka has deteriorated until a situation was reached some years ago when the entire system virtually collapsed and there was no university education worth speaking about. It was the same story in regard to primary, junior and secondary education. In the planned and controlled "populism" of socialist countries, admission to schools and universities are enlarged stage by stage, only after the money, resources and the materials were found for expansion. In Sri Lanka, governments anxious to appear "socialist" have put the cart before the horse, as in many other matters, and brought in millions of young people into a hastily enlarged educational system

without having the facilities to teach them and also the jobs the products of these schools and universities would demand after "qualifying"—even though the qualifications and training were inadequate and third rate.

In less than 10 years of Dahanayakism (he went out of the scene in 1960), the education system was in shambles, and for the last ten years or more, from 1967/68, successive governments have indulged in expensive experiments as how to improve the system. Irriyagolle (1966/1970) made bad into worse. Badiudin Mohamed (1970/1977) made the "worse" into something unbelievably shoddy and horrible—mainly under cover of fighting the 1971 insurgents, forgetting that the insurgency was a direct result of Dahanayakism and Irriyagolism in a society where economic growth was zero and development stagnant.

Nissanka Wijeyaratne inherited the shambles of Badiudinism. He no doubt wants to build everything anew again. This can mean that everything that exists has to be destroyed:

*'Ah, love! could thou and I with  
Fate conspire*

*To grasp this sorry Scheme of  
Things entire*

*Would not we shatter it to bits—  
and then*

*Remould it nearer to our Hear.'s  
Desire!*

The process of shattering the Scheme of Things to bits is a painful one—and that is what we are witnessing today in the educational field. And the remoulding to one's (Nissanka's and the government's) heart desire is still very much in the embryonic stage. Those who had once wanted to banish English into total oblivion now want to re-enthroned it as the important link in a three-language formula for education and national unity.

What is however before everybody's eye is the destruction of what is left of the Dahanayake-Irriyagolle-Badiudin scheme of university education. It is unfortunate and regrettable that the Minister Nissanka and the Administration do not seem capable of effecting this transformation without a self-defeating witch-hunt that will sooner or later boomerang on the government. Policemen who cannot act without seeing a Red, or an Insurgent, or a Hand Bomb behind every bush and in every student's hostel seem to be calling the tune and Minister Nissanka Wijeyaratne seems to have fallen victim to the same malady. He has even been stampeded into instructing the police to search the Librarian's office at the Pradeniya Campus for bombs, but even before they had drawn a blank he had sworn vengeance against Sri Lanka's most eminent bibliographer and undoubtedly one of the best in the world today. Nissanka Wijeyaratne even made press statements about disciplinary action against the much respected Librarian without any cause or justification. In these intemperate times, Ministers must be cautious about acting on hearsay or on stupid police intelligence reports. The Minister has spoken about the discovery of "enough bombs" in the student's hostels to stage a revolution and this is undoubtedly a flight of fancy that has helped to corrode the credibility of his good-intentioned attempts to create a new university system.

In addition to Police blunders and Ministerial outpourings in the red-baiting sections of the media, thugs operating in the name of the ruling party seem to have taken a hand to bring the peace of the grave-yard to the campuses—with the Police turning a blind eye to such thuggery. This is a repetition of the political thuggery that

had been carried on in the name of the United Front and the SLFP from 1970 to 1977 (with the Police shutting both eyes). Jayawardene's Dharmista can neither condone nor tolerate this whatever the provocation from a small section of the Students.

Elsewhere in this issue is published a statement for the record of the Vidyalanakara Student's Council. The primary reason *Tribune* has published this is because the official, semi-official and non-official media has refused to publish it. What the statement sets out is not *Tribune's* point of view or its findings after investigation. It is a statement of a student body that merits consideration. It contains allegations of a serious nature that must be investigated by any government even if it is not Dharmista.

There is no university education in Sri Lanka today. There does not seem to be any prospect of university education in this country in the real sense of the word for a long time to come. What we see today is stagnation (whilst a new scheme is being devised) and a persistent guerilla war of attrition between impatient youth and an intolerant administration that seems incapable of distinguishing uproarious and articulate undergraduates from professional robbers and hardened criminals. It is the government that must show understanding, it is the government that must handle dissidents with magnanimity (and Dharmista) to make it possible even for the most rebellious youth to come inside the fold of a dharmista society!

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS FALLOUT:** The first time-bomb blast from the inept and stupid handling of our Foreign Affairs has burst. Pakistan has increased its import duty on tea in a way that Sri Lanka's tea exports to that country will be affected more adversely than tea from India and Bangladesh. These

two countries (and Indonesia and Kenya) have low grade teas that will continue to find a market in Pakistan whilst the higherpriced Sri Lanka tea will be virtually pushed out. Last year, Pakistan had topped the list of tea buyers from Sri Lanka—it had bought 28 million kgs. compared to the 27 million kgs. bought by the traditional buyer, Britain, which was pushed into second place. The loss of the Pakistan market will be a serious blow to Sri Lanka's economy; and her export (foreign exchange) revenue expectation has to be revised.

Sri Lanka has enjoyed a very special relationship with Pakistan especially after the 'assistance' Mrs. Bandaranaike's government had rendered before, during and after the Bangladesh war. Pakistan has rightly felt that Sri Lanka was a close ally in her efforts to contain the big and powerful India. What a Buddhist, non-aligned inhibited, Mrs. Bandaranaike, had achieved through deft and subtle policies has been shattered by the Muslim pro-west tilting Hameed through the ineptitude, negligence and neglect of our relations with Pakistan.

No ambassador has been sent to Islamabad although one has been appointed to New Delhi. An invitation to visit Pakistan handed over seven months ago was ignored by Hameed in the same way he had ignored an invitation to visit India. Hameed had dangled the carrot of his visiting India on three occasions only to disappoint them for no justifiable reason. Hameed has gone to India this week without making arrangements to go to Pakistan. He signalled his trip to India by opening his heart to the *Sun* (as usual) without either the Foreign office being any the wiser about the objectives he hopes to pursue during this visit, or taking any other newspaper into his confidence.

What Hameed does not seem to realise is that the facetious and vacuous bombast he indulged in. Australia and New Zealand about an Asian Common Market must have completely upset Pakistan. Hameed in his innocence does not seem to know the implications of a Common Market. He only seems to like the high-sounding and sonorous nomenclature, "Common Market" without realising that the basic essential of a Common Market is lower tariffs or even the removal of all tariffs. In the South Asian context, it would mean the opening of the floodgates to the highly developed light and consumer industries of India to expand without tariff barriers inside the contemplated market zone. When Iran suggested a Common Market for South Asia, Pakistan had risen up in arms and had objected to it. India had been embarrassed by Iran's suggestion and the matter was dropped by Iran. When the Shah visited India this January, he did not speak about the South Asian Common Market. He spoke only of the more conventional and practicable "regional economic co-operation."

Hameed of Sri Lanka has been campaigning for an Asian Common Market—and it can only help South Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong, India etc. etc. For Pakistan this cry of an Asian Common Market must have come as a real danger signal. And no sooner Hameed announced his long over-due trip to India (without making arrangements for a trip to Pakistan), Islamabad came down heavily on Sri Lanka tea. India has hundreds of exports to Pakistan and tea is low down on the list, but for Sri Lanka tea is the prime export and to lose its biggest market is a serious blow.

If Sri Lanka had an ambassador at Islamabad he would have been able to alert Colombo. Foreign Minister Hameed, it is well known,

in diplomatic circles, has no dialogues with any ambassadors stationed in Colombo. He has committed so many *faux pas* in keeping several of them waiting in his ante-chamber for long periods of time, after fixing appointments, that his style of work has become the underground talk of the diplomatic world in Colombo. In fact, he has often cancelled appointments after ambassadors have turned up at his office though protocol demands that such cancellations should be notified in advance. What ambassadors and others do not realise is that the delays, postponements and cancellations are due to the failure of the official photographer to turn up in time to take pictures that must appear in the papers. (In journalistic circles, it is known that an important international visitor had to call a second time to see Hameed only to have the photograph taken!) These little childish idiosyncracies and stupid foibles may evoke laughter and ridicule in the drawing rooms or cocktail parties in Colombo, but what many do not realise is the long-term damage to the foreign relations of this country. Such damage takes a little time to come home to roost—but the first has come from Pakistan.

Minister Hameed has not only kept some of the most important diplomatic posts vacant but he has not even appointed the Trade Commissioners the Ministry of Trade had wanted eight months ago. If there had been even a Trade Commissioner in Pakistan, he would have been able to signal Colombo about the impending Import Duty on Tea for the Colombo government to initiate preventive diplomatic action. Inquiries reveal that the delay was due to a Hameedian obsession that he could train "his" ambassadors to do the trade commissioners' work as well.

Unless the President takes corrective action immediately, Sri Lan-

ka's relations with foreign countries will suffer a major set-back from which it will take long time to recover.

As we go to press we have received information from the capitals of a few of the 86 Non-aligned states that they have been informed that the name of our Foreign Minister Abdul Cader Shahul Hameed should be spelled thus: ABDEL QADIR SHAQLUL HAMEED. Why Akurana's plain and simple Abdul Cader Shahul Hameed should be changed to Arabic style *Abdel Qadir Shaqlul* is a question for the voters of Akurana who will soon demand an International Airport there to get a glimpse of their MP in transit between his foreign travels—22 visits in 7 months!

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

By Ariel

### Israel, The Outlaw —responsible for Middle East imbroglio—

The Middle East continues to steal the headlines of the world press. The French elections, in which the Centre-Right coalition romped home to a comfortable and absolute majority, has now faded away from the front pages. Rhodesia attracts attention, but the Israel invasion of South Lebanon and the new Begin doctrine that Israeli will not withdraw from the West Bank on the basis of his new interpretation of UN Resolution 242.

Commentator Mark Burdman (NSIPS) on March 15, immediately after the Israeli attack said: "In a blitzkrieg raid patterned after the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939 that triggered World War II, 30,000 Israeli troops today completed Phase One of a ground, air and

sea invasion of neighbouring Lebanon. The Nazi-like Israeli action, coupled with the full-scale mobilization in Washington of the braying jackals of the US Jewish Lobby, has created a profound crisis for those saner Carter Administration forces determined to push a coherent US trade and export policy to strengthen the US dollar. Any irresolution by President Carter or this faction in the face of the Israeli atrocity will virtually put the US policymaking apparatus down the path toward thermo-nuclear war. Aimed at exterminating the political leadership of the Palestinian Arabs, the Israeli blitzkrieg has already thrown the Middle East region into a general state of chaos. It also threatens to lead to either a direct military showdown between the US and the Soviets or a rapid deterioration in the United States' vitally important relations with Saudi Arabians and other Arab states. The Begin government's actions also expose as a Gobbels-style 'Big Lie' the Jewish Lobby's self-righteous moralisms about 'saving lives' and 'opposing terrorism' that have been promulgated since the western intelligence-manufactured "Palestinian terror" raid in Israel last weekend—an operation modelled in every particular on the phony 'Polish murders' hoked up by the Nazis as a pretext for their 1939 invasion of Poland..."

The writer, then, went on to refer to some of the mysterious aspects of the alleged PLO raid that had triggered the Israeli attack: "Evidence is accumulating that the March 11 'Palestinian terror raid was a hastily patched together operation by British and Israeli intelligence to lay the groundwork for the Lebanon terror. According to a US military intelligence analyst, the Israeli raid into Lebanon 'had been planned two months ago' and 'just needed a pretext to be unleashed'. Thi-



pretext was ably provided on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides of the operation. From the Israeli side, two aspects are outstanding. One, Israeli police forces committed so many uncharacteristic security lapses, that calls have arisen in Israel for a commission of inquiry to be formed to investigate; a well informed Israeli source called the lapses 'extraordinary'. Second, the death toll for the raid was significantly increased by the massive response of Israeli officers who set the hijacked bus on fire by wildly shooting at the vehicle rather than attempting a more sophisticated and moderated counter-terror response. The March 11 Israeli police actions definitely suggested that a bloodbath was the order of the day from some higher ups itching for a holy war against the PLO."

Further, Begin has declared that Israel "would occupy a six-mile corridor in Lebanon indefinitely" until Arab states neighbouring Israel agreed to crack down and eliminate the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Begin's proclamation about Israel's intentions to annex South Lebanon will ensure a permanent escalation of the violence in the region. The PLO will be forced into permanent guerrilla resistance.

The Israeli invasion was total devastation—from all reports available so far. But what Israel had not bargained for was the sharp reaction from Arab states including Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This put the USA on the defensive. Washington has not yet condemned the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon but tried to pull Tel Aviv's chestnuts out of the fire of Arab anger through a cease-fire and a UN Peace Keeping Force in South Lebanon.

This immediately led countries like Russia to state that the USA had actively connived with Israel in the attack on South Lebanon. Moscow pointed out that the US, even in the UN Security Council, did not condemn the Israeli aggression but only wanted a cease-fire and an Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon. The US may have certainly followed this course for tactical reasons and also because of the power and influence of the Jewish Lobby in the US. But the US has lost a great deal of prestige in Arab and Third World countries by not denouncing Israeli aggression in South Lebanon.

A *Smachar* report from Moscow dated March 25 stated: "The Soviet Union today scoffed at reports of serious differences between Israel and the United States following the latest visit of the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Begin to Washington. According to *Tass*, the talk of serious differences concealed Washington's desire at least ostensibly, to dissociate itself from Israel's glaringly aggressive stand which was condemned throughout the world. The *Pravda* thought the visit in fact showed the United States' actual complicity with Israel which 'cannot be camouflaged by any hypocritical propaganda.' The paper's New York correspondent noted that the reported differences related not to Israel's aggression against Lebanon, not to the cardinal problems of West Asia settlement, but only to Israeli settlements on the Sinai. The view reflected by the paper as well as *Tass* is that Washington has enough leverages to influence Israel's policy and had it not been for its support Tel Aviv would not have been emboldened to take the rigid stand it had taken of ignoring the lawful rights of the Arab peoples. The Soviet media concede that the US was concerned over the fate of Egyptian-Israeli negotiations which

might be led into an impasse by Israel's attempts to secure additional concessions."

*It will take great deal of propaganda skill by the US to convince even its friends that Israel acted in the manner it did not because of the support received from the USA. Even the Saudis have begun to review their basic policy fundamentals in regard to Israel and the Western countries that support it. Israel has now compelled the Arabs to close their ranks, and an emerging unity among Arab countries will bring about a major metamorphosis in the Middle East.*

Press reports from Middle Eastern countries further indicate that the Arabs are now convinced the Knesset (which has backed Begin's policy vis a vis South Lebanon and the West Bank) has given executive and legislative sanction to carry out a policy of genocide against the Palestinian Arabs. The Arabs now blame the USA for arming Israel (even with nuclear bombs) and for permitting it to use the arms for aggressive actions (and not merely for defence). American apologists have angered Arab opinion by arguing that Israel has not violated the conditions of delivery of the American weapons (i.e., not for aggression against countries in the region), and by insinuating that Israeli action in Lebanon was in "self-defence".

Though President Carter, at his recent meeting in Washington, could not persuade Begin to accept the universally accepted interpretation of Resolution 242 and withdraw from the West Bank and Sinai (in fact, the emphasis was on Sinai to appease Egypt in the first instance), there does not seem to have been any talk about Israel's action to liquidate Lebanon, Syria and the PLO. The Israeli attack on Lebanon has alerted the Non-aligned Movement and even the UNP government in Sri Lanka into

issuing strong condemnation of Israel's action. Israel's recent actions have made it an outcast among the civilized nations of the world.

In the meantime, there is great concern in Cyprus about further possible provocations to undermine the Kyprianou government. Middle East agency despatches have cited Greek Cypriot papers to show that they entertain fears of subversion by the same "foreign intelligence sources" referred to by Arafat as being responsible for the murder of Setai. Cyprus has at all times assisted the PLO and the liberation forces in the region and Israel and its western allies seem anxious to have a government and administration that would collaborate with anti-PLO forces. THE LATEST EVENTS in the Middle East have set in motion a chain reaction of anxiety in all the capitals of the world. Some commentators have expressed fears that South Lebanon may turn out to be a Sarajevo. Batuk Gathani, in a despatch from London dated March 20, to the *Hindu* stated: "Not only are Western friends of Israel perplexed by its jingoistic and defiant mood, there is also a growing concern about the long-term prospect of a permanent peace in West Asia. Israel apart, such convulsions can tear apart the norms of political stability in the Arab States. How many military coups in the Arab world can you envisage? Many people are wondering. How long can Sadat of Egypt, Assad of Syria, Hussein of Jordan and the monarchies of the oil States last before another revolution sweeps the Arab world? These imponderables are causing nightmares in the Western chanceries today. The economic and political future of the Western world is so intricately interwoven with that of the existing Arab world that any power—Israel or the Soviet Union—trying to destabilise the status

quo in the Arab world is touching at the raw nerves of the Western world.

"Hence the deep concern about the wider perils of Israel's invasion of Lebanon. It seems certain that the rumblings of Israeli tanks in southern Lebanon has now killed the peace initiative begun by President Sadat of Egypt. This single action has destroyed both Israel's and President Sadat's credibility in the Arab world. Israeli talks of eradicating 'for all time' the Palestinian Liberation Movement which is easier said than done. The consequences can be alarming and puts the whole region perilously near to war. It also remains to be seen, if the Israeli strategy is to goad Syria into counter-action. This is what could spark a fifth Arab-Israel war."

Premier Begin is suspected of ulterior motives and when he confronts President Carter in the near future he is going to have an awkward time in Washington. He has already prepared his Government's 'revisionist' interpretation of UN Resolution 242, which is the acknowledged framework for an Arab-Israeli peace. Mr. Begin will carry with him a list of specific proposals, which remain a closely guarded secret. This list has been prepared after Mr. Begin was advised by American Jewish leaders and American politicians who visited Israel recently that President Carter would be displeased if their meetings on West Asia got bogged down on generalities.

Perhaps in a surreptitious way, some analysts even feel that the prime purpose of Israel's invasion of Lebanon is to change the present situation in West Asia. It is now a question of testing Assad's guts—some members of London's

Jewish community are saying. Israel would be tempted into an all-out conflict with Syria in which Assad's armed forces would be devastated. Knowing the deep-rooted personal and national rivalry between Presidents Sadat and Assad, the Israelites may feel that the time is ripe to drive a proper wedge between the two Arab powers in order to neutralise their ability to go on an offensive. So it is suspected that Israel, aware of its huge military superiority and divisions in the Arab world, has embarked on an adventure in Lebanon confident that the Arab powers are incapable of retaliating effectively. For the Western Powers it sounds like a ghastly realisation which further dims the already faint prospect for peace in West Asia."

What next?

Carter has nothing to offer. His trip to Venezuela, Brazil, Nigeria and Liberia cannot contribute to a solution in the Middle East. Carter will soon be confronted with problems similar to Israeli actions in South Vietnam. Recently, only pro western states like Israel and Rhodesia have indulged in attacks on other sovereign states allegedly in defence of terrorism and against guerilla movements. What if countries like Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and the like follow the Israeli example?

Sadat is in a difficult position. He has been ever since he went to Jerusalem. Weizmann's latest attempt in Cairo to persuade Sadat to re-start negotiations in order to negotiate a separate Israeli-Egypt agreement has failed. This means that the Israeli adventure in South Lebanon, intended to break Egypt from the PLO, and thus prepare the ground for a separate peace has flopped. Sadat wants Israel to change its stand and has warned that if Israel continues its present intransigence,

it would be playing into the hands of the Soviet Union. This means that Sadat is threatening a new move to start negotiations with Moscow. Already he has started moves to re-establish friendly ties with the radical Arab States of the Rejection Front.

Begin will soon be hoist with his own petard. (The Concise Oxford Dictionary explains the proverb thus: "blown up by his own bombs, ruined by his own devices against others"). From 1948, Israel has pushed its boundaries, stage by stage, and peace moves were on the basis of withdrawing to boundaries, first of 1948, then 1956, then 1967, then 1973 and soon it will be 1978. Where this will end is hard to say, but it cannot go on for ever. Israeli skulduggery must end sometime or other.

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TOPICAL

## Hilarity Breeds Contempt

by Alan Watkins

**We publish this article with acknowledgements to the *Observer* London, of March 19, 1978. It was the main and only topic in its column *Political Diary*.**

FAIRLY regularly, about twice a year on average I should say, our MPs make fools of themselves over questions of parliamentary privilege. The cases fall into recognisable categories.

First of all there is the drunk-in-charge-of-the-country case, which follows allegations in the Press, or by an MP (a recent example is Mr. Patrick Duffy), that our legislators spend too much time propping up Westminster's numerous bars. Then there is the leak-from-the-Select-Committee case. We had an illustration of this last week. On

Monday, after a short debate, the House decided by 133 votes to 70 to haul the *Daily Mail* and the *Guardian* before the Committee of Privileges. The newspapers' offence was to disclose some of the contents of the forthcoming report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration.

Then again, there is the we-don't-take-orders case. Here the MPs assert—or try to assert—their freedom from outside pressures. A recent example was provided by Mr. Arthur Scargill. He said that sponsored MPs from Yorkshire who failed to support NUM policy might find themselves in trouble. Mr. Scargill was invited to appear before the Committee of Privileges. He declined. In effect, he told the Committee to get lost. While newspapers are bullied by the Committee—and tend to respond by grovelling—Mr Scargill was adamant. And he got away with it.

Last week, however, there were signs that the newspapers would not prove quite so pliant as on previous occasions. The lobby—the organisation of political correspondents at Westminster—demanded that the *Daily Mail* and the *Guardian* journalists should be legally represented and that the Committee's hearings should be held in public. In the past, privilege proceedings have been secret and inquisitorial rather than public and judicial. I foresee a row.

**And the row will be complicated by the fact that very few people understand parliamentary privilege. Certainly very few MP's understand it. For instance, there is a distinction, which has been blurred over the centuries, between a breach of privilege and a contempt of the House. The first derives from the constitutional struggles between King and Commons, the second from the medieval notion of the High**

**Court of Parliament. A breach of privilege is an action or threat which prevents an MP from going about his job. A contempt is, well, cheek or what MPs take to be cheek.**

Thus, of the examples with which I began, the first and the second (drunks and leaks respectively) are really contempt, while the third (Mr. Scargill) is a possible breach of privilege. There is, however, an argument that goes as follows: any contempt of the House lessens the House's effectiveness, because it is essential for our MPs to be treated with respect at all times; therefore every contempt is automatically a breach of privilege.

But the argument will not wash. In 1957, for example, during the post-Suez petrol-rationing period the *Sunday Express* accused MPs of giving themselves favourable treatment. This was perfectly true: constituency organisations were rationed generously. The case turned on the distinction between an MP's personal and political capacities. In the end the paper's editor, Mr. John Junor had to apologise at the Bar of the House, which he did with great dignity. Nothing that he or his paper had said was interfering with the MP's performance of their duties. They were cross with him, that is all, and were determined to 'make an example' of him.

Exactly the same applies with Select Committees. It is no doubt annoying for the members of the Committee (for the non-leakers anyway) when their proceedings are prematurely disclosed but no one can say that the work of Parliament is impeded thereby. Royal Commissions and departmental inquiries do not enjoy any special protection. Why should Parliamentary Committees be placed in a special protected position? There is, in fact, no reason whatever, apart from the self-importance of some MPs.

Occasionally, it is true. Parliament behaves sensibly. A few years ago, for instance, a report in the *Economist* anticipated a committee's findings. The paper's editor, Mr. Andrew Knight, and its then political correspondent, Mr. Mark Schreiber, told the Committee of Privileges that they did not know they were doing anything wrong and that they were deeply sorry. Nevertheless, the Committee recommended that the paper's representative should be barred from the precincts for six months. But the House reversed this on a vote, and let the *Economist* in again.

The House also has the power to reprimand, to summon offenders to the Bar and to imprison until the end of the parliamentary session. The courts have always been chary of interfering. In 1967 the Committee of Privileges concluded that these penalties were all a bit silly, though they did not put the matter in quite these words. *Sensible men would have gone on to*

*conclude from this that maybe the penal jurisdiction itself was silly too. But no. The committee looked around for more effective penalties and came up with the idea of fines.*

Last month, 11 years later, the House accepted this change without a division. There is, in fact, utter confusion about whether the House already has the power to fine. There are three views: first, that it has this power now; second, that it can give itself the power by simple resolution; and, third, that the power to fine requires legislation, an Act of Parliament.

The situation is serious not only for the two newspapers involved but for all newspapers. The previous hazards of Parliamentary privilege were mitigated by the essentially ludicrous nature both of the proceedings and of their possible consequences. The Committee of Privileges gratified the vanity of its members and wasted the time of those summoned before it. In this attempt to make its operations

more rational it is making them more dangerous to freedom. Newspapers have quite enough troubles already, without running the additional risk of being fined by the House of Commons.

Perhaps the House cannot divest itself powers it already possesses. But it can make clear that it regards its penal jurisdiction as at an end, at any rate where non-MPs are concerned. If MPs require any special privileges (and the one generally agreed privilege is absolute freedom of speech) they can be safeguarded under the ordinary law administered by the courts.

Newspapers, for their part, can make clear that they regard Select Committees as fair game, in season all the year round—and that they have no intention of paying any fines levied under the system of lynch law operated by the Committee of Privileges and the House of Commons.

## SRI LANKA CHRONICLE

# March 17 — March 28

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—Dinamina; LD—Lankadipa; VK—Virakesari; ATH—Aththa; SM—Silumina; SLD—Sri Lankadipa; JD—Janadina; DP—Dinapathi; SU—Sun; DW—Dawasa; CM—Chinthamani; WK—Weekend; RR—Rivirasa; EN—Eelanadu; IDPR—Information Department Press Release; DK—Dinakara.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 17:** The GCEC has announced a five year tax holiday to licensed enterprises within its proposed Investment Promotion Zone; investment incentives will be on a graded scale according to the siting of factories in the IPZ, creation of employment, export orientation, capital investment and development of technology. A people's sector with an integrated package of proposals including blueprints of the

necessary institutions and ancillary devices to promote a people's sector responsive to the needs of the economy and of the people has been recommended to the government by the People's Sector Committee. The maximum retail price of a lb of Bombay onions was fixed at Rs. 1.50 when the Cost of Living Committee met yesterday. For the first time since the days of the Sinhala kings, the Buddha relics will be taken for exposition to the Northern and Eastern Provinces. There was a clash between two factions of undergraduates of the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka yesterday; the police moved in and brought the situation under control—CDN. Over 150,000 householders who have lost their subsidies in rice and sugar have appealed to the Minister of Food and Co-operatives for relief—CDM. The Minister of Education last evening removed the President of the Vidyalankara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka from his post following last morning's clashes that took place at the campus. State plantations will have to pay 25% more for their fertilizer supplies in the future. The Secretary General of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee has emphasised the need for the establishment of a common fund for Asian countries—SU. The Minister of Irrigation, Power

and Highways said that USSR as well as China agree with our economic policies and have agreed to grant us aid—LD. The Education Department is having difficulty in teaching science; out of the 251 science teachers appointed recently, 200 have resigned—DM. The Department of Immigration and Emigration issues about 500 passports a day; 13,000 passports were issued last month—DW. One man who was injured in yesterday's brawl at the Vidyalkara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka died at the General Hospital Colombo last night; the police said that the man identified as Christopher Jayatileke was not a university student; an inquest into his death will be held today. An unknown group of persons had allegedly attacked the JVP office at the Aesthetic Studies Institute of the University of Sri Lanka, Colombo, last evening; the IGP said that the police were making investigations to find out whether the attack was politically motivated—CO.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 18:** The new government in Sri Lanka has pledged itself to an age of development and economic growth; to achieve this, our people will not seek inspiration from within the pages of books or reports laden with unproductive theories said the Finance Minister when he inaugurated the meeting of the Board of Governors of the IDRC. A crop improvement project for Sri Lanka valued at 330,000 Canadian dollars was among over 25 development research projects approved by the Board of Governors of the IDRC now being held at Colombo. The government cannot permit an unfettered increase in coconut prices said the Minister of Plantation Industries yesterday. The Non-aligned Co-ordinating Bureau was due to meet in emergency session to examine closely the situation arising from the recent military attack on Lebanon by Israel—CDN. A verdict of homicide was issued for the arrest of Baddegama Somita Thero an undergraduate at the Vidyalkara Campus when an inquiry was held into the death of D. C. H. Jayatileke during the recent disturbances there. The Students Councils of the Colombo, Vidyodaya, Vidyalkara and Katubedde Campuses of the University of Sri Lanka have asked the authorities for protection from thugs and other outsiders. 1700 acres of land vested with the Land Reform Commission are to be distributed on lease to fruit growers. Farmers who obtain cultivation loans from banks will in future have to sell 20% of their produce to the PMB. Police have launched a massive country-wide probe to ascertain whether foreigners posing off as 'hippies' are a security risk and a threat to national sovereignty. The Ministry of Education announced that the selection of students to universities for the academic year 1978 has already begun. Over 20 research projects aimed at improving the lives of people in developing countries have been approved

by the IDRC's Board of Governors. The government of Japan will provide Sri Lanka a loan of one billion eight hundred million yen (about 7.5 million US dollars) under an agreement signed in Colombo yesterday—SU. It will be necessary to have a certain amount of knowledge in Sinhala to get promotions said the deputy Minister of Public administration yesterday—VK. The deputy minister of Defence has decided to station an army unit consisting of about 1000 army personnel in the South to stop the rising rate of organised crimes—DW.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 19:** World Bank Vice President for South Asia, W. David Hopper yesterday categorically endorsed the thrust of Sri Lanka's current development programmes. Former PM Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan was sentenced to death by hanging today for ordering a political assassination three years ago. The Minister of Education has ordered a detailed investigation into problems faced by the country's private schools in an effort to extend them some state assistance. The scarcity of safety matches will soon be over; this is because consignments of matches from China and India have just been received. A Committee consisting of members of the Press Council and representatives of newspaper organisations has been appointed to draw up a code of ethics for journalists—SO. The country was handed over to us in a practically ungovernable condition by the Sirimavo Bandaranaike government said the PM speaking at the Girl Guides Association meeting yesterday. Mobile phones will be provided to all ministers and deputy ministers shortly. Police sources expressed alarm over the reported statement of CTB officials that it resorted to a higher rate of overloading than in previous years in order to offset the losses the CTB had incurred. The Overseas Telecommunications Service will come to a virtual halt within the next six months unless the authorities take prompt action to appoint suitable and qualified persons to it. Colour TV will be a reality in Sri Lanka by October next year as a result of the government accepting an offer by the Japanese government to set up TV here—ST. The IGP has presented a 'package deal' to the government calling for wide ranging amendments to the Criminal Justice Law and procedure with special reference towards the functions of the police in order to arrest the crime wave sweeping the country. The IDRC is to finance a study of agricultural labour in Sri Lanka—WK. The Minister of Health has decided to ask for the assistance of the CID to stop the pilferage of drugs from government hospitals—SM. 750,000 rice ration books have been requisitioned by the government, while 600,000 persons have retained them—RR.

**MONDAY, MARCH 20:** The scope and speed of the Sri Lanka government to accelerate the processing

of the FTZ has been complimented by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany following talks the Trade Minister had with state officials in Bonn. All development and economic growth programs of the new government will be aimed at satisfying the aspirations and hopes of the country's youth said the PM speaking at Devinuwara yesterday. The Non-aligned Co-ordinating Bureau which met at an emergency meeting last Friday condemned the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon and called upon all non-aligned countries to condemn this aggression and express solidarity with Lebanon and the Palestinian people. The Colombo West by-election takes place tomorrow. Aeronautical communication and radio navigational facilities at the country's two major airports—Katunayake and Ratmalana—will reach international standard, following a project now undertaken by the department of civil aviation—CDN. The prevailing tension in the Vidyalkara Campus area after the tragic death of D. C. H. Jayatilleke, a villager, has compelled the university authorities to cancel campus lectures until further notice. Although 170 new doctors assume duties this week, the nett gain of medical officers to the department is only 40; of the 350 vacancies in the medical cadre 310 will be still vacant. Complaints by consumers against co-operative societies alleging short weight and non availability of goods will be probed in detail by the co-operative department officials and deterrent punishment meted out to the guilty—CDM. The government has decided to offer a new deal for rural regions by concentrating development projects at strictly grass root level. The Colombo Municipal Council spent Rs. 12,553,626 to beautify Colombo city for the Non Aligned Conference held in Sri Lanka in August 1976, according to the yearly administrative report issued recently—SU. The Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka will in all probability become autonomous from next month—EN. The Central Bank will issue a note of Rs. 20 denomination on May 1—CO. The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands has received two consignments comprising 460 animals of pure bred heru, recorded Freisians and MRY Heifers as part of the generous gift from the Dutch government—IDPR No. 105. The government will be facing a shortage of skilled workers for development projects because skilled workers in large numbers are leaving the country: so far 40,000 have left —DM.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 21:** The present university education system will undergo a radical change shortly; this will involve the scrapping of the residential campuses and the setting up of over 30 affiliated University colleges the Minister of Education announced yesterday. The Civil Aviation Department will soon launch a Rs. 43 million project to develop Ratmalana airport as an alternative airport to the BIA Katunayake. The backlog in the Port is now virtually a thing of the past. Mr. M.

C. Canagaratnam, 2nd MP for Pottuvil, who was warded in the general hospital following gunshot injuries was discharged from the hospital on Sunday, after two months. The Explosive Act which has virtually been a dead letter due to scanty staff to implement it, is to be made more effective without any further burden on the tax payer. The Centre Right coalition today won France's general elections with a clear majority of at least 80 seats holding off the biggest challenge mounted by the Opposition left in the 20 years of the fifth republic—CDN. A University Commission will be appointed shortly to inquire into student problems from the time immediately prior to the Weerasooriya shooting at Peradeniya up to the present time said the Minister of Education. The Attorney General will shortly recommend to the government the tightening up of regulations to prevent hard core criminals being released on bail. The government will shortly grant an amnesty to owners of 'illicit' radios; this is apparently to encourage those who own radios but cannot prove the source of purchase to license the sets—CDM. The number of passengers in the ferry service between Sri Lanka and India is estimated at 4800 a week—SU. Police undertook a massive sweep of the Vidyodaya Campus between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. today and arrested five unauthorised persons who were found in a men's hostel; they also found several wooden clubs and a knuckle duster inside cubicles in the men's hostel and a kris knife. The Land Reform Commission has decided to distribute a minimum of 1/4 acre of land to each landless person in every district—LD. Seven foreigners have been nabbed trying to smuggle drugs into the country—DM.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22:** Israel ordered its forces to ceasefire in Southern Lebanon today, clearing the way for the arrival of a UN peace force. Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Bhutros Ghaly arrived here yesterday for talks with the Sri Lanka government. Running battles erupted in various parts of Pakistan on Monday between police and people protesting against the death sentence passed on PM Bhutto. The President will pay a floral tribute to the late Mr. D. S. Senanayake this morning at the statuy in the NSA premises; to mark the 26th anniversary of the death of Mr. Senanayake. The Minister of Posts and Telecommunications said yesterday that he was taking a series of measures to speed up the transmission of telexed messages from the Overseas Telecommunications Service. Baddegama Samindha Thero, the student monk wanted in connection with the death of Christopher Jayatilleke at the Vidyalkara Campus affray last Thursday has been arrested by the Kurunegala police. The UNP candidate Mr. Anura Bastian won the Colombo West By-election by a majority of 10,132 votes. A five member bench of the Supreme Court by

a 4-1 verdict over-ruled all objections yesterday against the enrolment of a Buddhist monk as an Attorney-at-law—CDM. Moves are afoot to convene a meeting of the major tea producing countries in the world with a view to bringing about an international tea agreement. The Textile Mill at Tulhiriya has been closed indefinitely since March 18 following a go slow by 6000 employees and their refusal to work overtime. Ration book holders will be entitled to draw two week's rice rations during the week of Avurudhu according to a decision taken by the Ministry of Food and Co-operatives—SU. Since there is an excess staff (over 26000) in the co-operative department throughout the island, the Ministry is taking steps to get them alternate employment in various other ministries and corporations—DP. The government is working out a pension system for workers in the private sector; a scheme to this effect is to be tabled at next week's Cabinet meeting—DM. The Paranthan Chemicals Corporation is conducting a feasibility study on the setting up of a chemical factory near Colombo using salt as the main raw material—LD. A consignment of sarees worth Rs. 31 million imported by Mr. Gnanam, a director of the FTZ, has been confiscated by the Customs and handed over to the Salu Sala—DK. The Ministry of Plan Implementation has decided to spend Rs. 268 million on the 168 electorates; this money will be spent to complete projects which were begun last year—DW. A mission led by Mr. Roger Harris of the FAO/UNDP Investment Centre is in Sri Lanka to examine project possibilities for investment in the coconut sector—IDPR No. 108. A six day National Workshop on Education for Rural Development was held from March 13 to 18; it was sponsored by the UNESCO—IDPR No. 109. The government is deeply concerned by what was officially described as 'apathy and lethargy' in the country's administrative structure that was retarding the nation's development effort; the President has ordered that immediate action be taken to ginger up the administration; ministers have been asked to look into this matter personally and reorganise all aspects of the administrative structure. A number of foreign publications—mostly fiction—remains unsold at city book shops; the estimated drop of sales is at 95% for fiction while sales of magazines have dropped to rock bottom—CO.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 23:** Egypt's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Boutros Ghaly who has been visiting key non-aligned nations as President Sadat's key envoy to whip up support on some important international questions including the Middle East peace initiative said yesterday that Israel's aggression against Lebanon had proved an obstacle on Middle East Peace. GA's who have been given greater authority to implement development, agricultural and administrative

programmes will be able to take on the spot decisions on tricky problems through a direct radio contact with Colombo. Two big textile mills similar to the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills are to be set up in the periphery of Moratuwa and Jaela; Japan, Switzerland and Belgium have already proposed help to set them up. A large number of agro-industrial ventures are to be set up in the Janawasama throughout the island according to the Chairman of the Janawasama Commission. The Ministry of Food and Co-operatives has launched a plan to streamline the food distribution network throughout the country. Lanka Salu Sala will provide interest free loans to co-operatives to enable them to buy their full quota of textiles for distribution before the Sinhala and Hindu New Year—CDN. Private denominational schools which opted to remain private when schools were taken over 16 years back will receive government assistance said the Minister of Education. The University of Sri Lanka has decided that the Sinhala students at the Jaffna Campus and who were accommodated in a special unit at Pellyagoda after the post election incidents will not be sent back to Jaffna. The National Congress of the Communist Party began its sittings at the New Town Hall, Colombo yesterday; delegates from 14 countries attended the conference—CDM. High ranking Ministers of Sri Lanka and Britain will meet in London shortly to negotiate the financing of the multi-million rupee Victoria reservoir scheme which is the largest of the 12 projects connected with the Mahaweli development programme. Sri Lanka will shortly enjoy a quota increase in respect of its drawings from the IMF while also maintaining a floating currency instead of fixed parity—SU. The government is making arrangements to grant loans to farmers who wish to purchase tractors imported by the government shortly—DP. Revenue collected last year exceeded the previous year's collection by 15%; Finance Ministry sources said that it was Rs. 5242.7 millions for 1977 which was 687.3 million more than the previous year. 274 homicides and murders have been committed from January to date—the highest ever recorded in a period of three months during the last 10 years—CO. The Food department has said that the government does not hope to raise the price of flour although it has gone up in the World Market; the loss on flour sales could be equalised by selling sugar, the price of which has gone down in the World Market—DW. Of the three director posts in government corporations one may be awarded to a worker; the Minister of Labour has sought the approval of the government for this proposal—DM.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 24:** When members of the Committee of Inquiry into the CGR paid a surprise visit to the workshops at 2 a.m. yesterday and they caught a

large number of workers napping. Co-ops have been given the sole authority to distribute textile material on ration cards for the Sinhala and Hindu New Year. The University has worked out a transfer scheme which would enable staffers (both academic and non academic) of one campus to obtain a transfer to another campus; arrangements have also been made to permit staffers to apply for transfers to some of the new campuses to be set up soon. Lord Caradon who will deliver the silver jubilee oration of the Family Planning Association's anniversary celebrations said that Sri Lanka had made a fine start on population control and that he had great respect for pioneers like us—CDN. Health authorities are perturbed at the 'alarming increase' in cases of food poisoning and have alerted their staff to take all possible measures to ensure maximum cleanliness in the preparation and serving of food especially in tourist hotels. A high powered World Bank team now in Sri Lanka is surveying the country's industrial capacity and its industrial development prospects—CDM. Last week's decision of the government to close down all residential campuses of the university has been followed up by a decision to scrap all residential Teacher's Training Colleges. A new system of management of 51 rest houses under the purview of the Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs will become effective from next month—SU. The government has taken steps to stock 1500 tons of dry chillies per month so that these stocks could be released when the prices are high. The World Bank has agreed to increase the sugar production of Sri Lanka and make it self sufficient by 1981—DW. The Wild Life Department has decided to spend one million rupees to expand and develop the Wild Life Sanctuaries. The Tourist Board has joined a scheme with USA, UK, France, Germany, Japan and Australia to bring in their tourists to Sri Lanka—LD. The government has decided to raise the price of flour after the New Year. Patients in government hospitals will in future be charged for occupation; higher education will also be have to be paid for in future—JD.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 25:** Students pursuing higher studies will soon have the opportunity of having the option to select the medium in which they should be instructed—Sinhala, Tamil or English; a proposal to this effect has been accepted in principle as the government is convinced that compulsion of any sort should not be placed on the students. The President asked all GA's to launch development and agricultural expansion projects which are employment generating and which could be completed within the space of one year. Visitors to the Vihara Maha Devi Park will be able to ride a bay train within the next six weeks. Quazi courts dealing with Muslim divorce, maintenance and allied matters will be re-organised soon. The Lady Ridgeway

Hospital for children is to receive assistance from Japanese Rotarians—CDN. The Curriculum Development Centre of the Education Ministry is to be scrapped with immediate effect; the Minister of Education said this was because the unit was riddled with inefficiency and lethargy. Three international bankers from France, Switzerland and West Germany have shown willingness to give a bigger quantum of loans to Sri Lanka for investment projects. Assistant Medical practitioners will henceforth be eligible for registration after 15 years of aggregate service as against 20 years previously—CDM. The government acting on a request by the police has decided to change the laws of the land in order to give the law enforcement authorities more powers to bring the rising spate of crime under control. Over 50,000 farmers will be trained in advanced agricultural techniques which are followed by major rice producing countries of the world. An increase of 32% will be recorded in Sri Lanka's non-traditional exports last year according to official figures released recently—SU. 2500 tons of onions worth Rs 4m which are stored at Welisara will be spoilt if not distributed immediately—DW.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 26:** Sri Lanka is opening up its territorial waters to foreign fishing fleets in an effort to provide cheaper fish to local consumers the Minister of Fisheries disclosed yesterday. The number of revenue districts in the country will be increased to 30 from the present 22 if the report of the committee appointed to go into the redemarcation of the boundaries of the revenue districts, AGA's divisions and local bodies is accepted by the government. Over twenty British firms who intend to invest in the FTZ will participate initially in an Investment Fair to be held in Sri Lanka from April 22 to 26. The Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Sri Lanka has finalised action to increase the workforce of its member firms by 10% by the beginning of May.—SO The Third Amendment to the Constitution is expected to contain several provisions which seek to rid the public sector of bribery and corruption. The Ministry of Transport has decided to take quick action to curb the alarming increase in rash and negligent driving and driving under the influence of liquor in the CTB. The government is to put a break on foreign jaunts by Chairmen of state corporations and statutory bodies. The private sector will provide employment to about 50,000 jobless persons from May 1—ST. The IGP has directed that a highly flexible contingency plan be immediately formulated to deal with any outbreak of violence similar in nature to that of April 1971 armed uprising—WK. The government is considering a proposal to levy tax from those who are getting employment abroad. May Day this year will not have any political flavour; there will be no processions or



public meetings—VK. A spokesman for the JVP said that if the JVP came to power no language will have the status of official language; and they will give equal status to all three languages—EN.

**MONDAY, MARCH 27:** Colombo's sewerage system is near bursting point; the city's water borne sewerage system constructed 65 years ago has over-run its design period by 27 years; it was designed with 'ultimate' flows estimated for 1951. The CID has warned the government that losses through pilferage in the Colombo harbour will reach Rs. 11 million mark by the end of this year. Sri Lanka due to its family planning program, is the envy of many other countries in Asia said the director of the UN Fund for Population Activities at yesterday's meeting—CDN. The Minister of Plantation Industries has agreed to a proposal to the National Estate Workers' Union to reserve 10% of the profits from each estate to be credited to the Estate Welfare Fund. The Minister of Education has decided that maximum opportunities should be given to the public to criticise the proposed universities bill. The CP of Sri Lanka unanimously adopted the report on party organisation presented by the Central Committee—CDM. The Ministry of Transport is expected to introduce measures to bring down prices of drugs from next month and import some essential drugs which are in short supply. Sri Lanka has been chosen as the venue for the Law Asia Conference to be held next year—SU. H.E. Mr. William Solomon Kaboga Matovu, First High Commissioner for Uganda in Sri Lanka with residence in New Delhi presented his letter of credence to the President today—IDPR NO. 58/78. H.E. Mr. Yaacob bin Mohamed High Commissioner to Sri Lanka with residence in New Delhi presented his letter of credence to the President today. H.E. Mr. John R. P. Dumas High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago with residence in New Delhi presented his letter of credence to the president today—IDPR No. 57/78. The government of India has appointed Sri Thomas Abraham as High Commissioner for India in Sri Lanka—IDPR No. 61/78. Investigations into 2 million rice ration books which were issued temporarily will start from 27 March. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has decided to start an Arts Centre on 30 acres of land; this centre will comprise an Arts museum, and schools of drama music, arts etc—DW. The Sri Lanka government will have talks with the Indian government to get aid to improve our fishing industry—LD.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 28:** The government has decided to appoint officers in all DRO divisions to advise farmers; these officers will be like the 'Periya Dorais' of the period of the British planters said the President. The Press Council will set up its own complex on a two acre block allocated at the race course by the PM; this

complex will comprise a special library on mass media, a research unit and a press institute apart from the administration block. The UNP Working Committee has recommended to the government that on May Day the hiring of CTB buses and transport of people by lorries should not be allowed as a measure to prevent damage and loss to private property and CTB vehicles as had happened in the past. The three major ports in Sri Lanka—Colombo, Trincomalee and Galle—will soon be administered by one central authority—CDN. The Food Commissioner yesterday interdicted five Food Department clerks at the port for being absent from work although they were supposed to be on duty. Sri Lanka will contribute 1000 dollars to the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa. The University of Sri Lanka authorities have estimated that 98% of university students want to get on with their studies and that a mere 2% are disrupting campus activities. Students of the Colombo Campus of the University except the Medical Faculty went on strike yesterday in support of their demands which include withdrawal of the White Paper on Employment relations and the alleged lock out at the Thulhiriya mills. Within the past few months it has been possible to re-introduce 82 trains that had been cancelled by the last government said the GM, Railways—CDM. 'Coastal Resources Development Programme, will be the main functions of a recently set up coastal Conservation Division in the Fisheries Ministry to protect by law the coastline of Sri Lanka. The DIG North Western range yesterday directed all OIC stations in the country to immediately compile a comprehensive register of 'suspected persons' in their respective areas—SU. All school children will henceforth be banned from joining outside movements, unions or organisations without the permission of the Principal of the school. The country has incurred a debt of Rs 1,70,00,000 loss due to the frauds in the co-operative sector—DP. The

#### WITHOUT COMMENT

##### Fish Prices Escalate

**NEGOMBO:** In this coastal town of Negombo the fish prices have shot up far beyond the reach of the average consumer and the housewives are complaining. The shortage of fresh fish for the local residents here is attributed to the poor catch obtained by the fishermen during the past few weeks and also due to the purchase of available fish by mudalalies for selling them at Colombo and other cities. As an alternative for fresh fish most consumers here now go in for dry fish and meat which are comparatively cheaper and also readily available.

Sun—4/4/78

## BOUQUET

## VIP's Foreign Travel

\*THE PRESIDENT, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, has according to the Ceylon Observer of March 29 "frowned" on unnecessary overseas trips of ministers, parliamentarians and other government big wigs. The report read: "The President, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, has come down hard on official junketing abroad. The Ministers themselves are included in a Presidential decision requiring that these trips be pruned to 'the barest minimum'. The Observer reliably understands that the question of official travel abroad came up at a recent meeting of the Ministers chaired by the President. Mr. Jayawardene has stressed the need to keep these trips down to a minimum and asked his Ministers to scrutinise the need for official travel abroad by public servants, corporation chairmen and officials as well as their own trips and make decisions regarding their usefulness before the cases are referred to the Prime Minister or the President himself. Earlier Mr. Jayawardene, as Prime Minister, directed that trips abroad by public and corporation officials, chairmen, directors etc., be kept to the barest minimum. The new directive on this matter, it was noted, covers the Ministers themselves. Recently a question was raised in Parliament about the number of foreign trips undertaken by the former Prime Minister, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike. Prime Minister R. Premadasa furnished the details and commented: 'very, soon people will ask about our trips. An Opposition MP has given notice of a Parliamentary question on the number of trips abroad undertaken by Ministers and Deputy Ministers of the present Government.'

*This curb on limitless and meaningless travel has not come a day*

*too soon. In fact, it should have been imposed months ago.*

The Sunday Times of March 26, had a report about restrictions on foreign travel by Chairmen of Corporations: "The government is to put a brake on foreign jaunts by chairmen of State Corporations and Statutory Boards. They will be allowed to go abroad only after consideration of the usefulness of such trips by the government and with the express permission of the President Mr. J. R. Jayawardene. If any chairman of a state Corporation or Statutory Board wants to go abroad on any matter the Secretary of the Ministry under which the Corporation or Board functions must report to the Minister on the necessity for the trip. Sanction for it will be granted only if the government is convinced of its necessity".

Tribune has raised queries about the travel jaunts of ministers and other governmental chieftains. It will be recalled that the UNP had also raised questions about diplomatic passports being issued to persons not entitled to get them. The issue of diplomatic passports had become a scandal during the last regime: Is the new UNP regime also succumbing to the temptation of issuing diplomatic passports indiscriminately. Are ordinary MPs travelling abroad entitled to diplomatic passports? Is this privilege only confined to MPs of the ruling party? This is a matter on which the President must call for information to satisfy himself that the old hanky-panky about diplomatic passports is not revived.

In the meantime, a big bouquet to the President for coming down hard on foreign trips by Ministers and other Governmental VIPs.

## COLOMBO WEST

## Reactions And Comments

The by-election for the Colombo West electorate rendered vacant by the resignation of Mr. J. R. Jayawardene took place on Tuesday March 21. The results were as follows:

Mr. Anura Bastian (UNP)	13,156
Mr. D. W. Abayakoon (SLFP)	3,024
Mr. Bernard Soysa (LSSP)	3,019
Mr. N. Gooneratne (Ind.)	2,497
Mr. R. Wijaya Indra (Ind.)	334
Mr. N. P. Perera (Ind.)	30
Mr. G. K. S. Wijewardene (Ind.)	2
Mr. S. A. Karunaratne (Ind.)	24
Majority	10,132
Total polled	21,181
Total registered	37,983
Spoilt	71

The Daily News in publishing these results published the July 1977 General Election results as follows:

Mr. J. R. Jayawardene (UNP)	21,707
Mr. Lal Salgado (SLFP)	3,769
Mr. Sarath Wijesinghe (LSSP)	1,803
Mr. M. A. Navaratna Banda (Ind.)	70
Mr. Ashok Thabrew (Ind.)	53
Majority	17,938
Total polled	37,509
Spoilt votes	107

The total polled in July was given as 37,509, when it was really 27,509. Some local papers and commentators based their arguments on the mistaken figure of 37,509.

Tribune is publishing the views of different commentators and editorials to present our readers with a cross section of opinion on the results of the by-election. The only party which has so far made an official comment is the LSSP. Below is the statement issued by the Political Bureau of the LSSP on March 24:

"The Colombo West electorate is predominantly a middle class electorate. In fact very many of them are members of the bourgeoisie and English-speaking middle class elements. It is to be noted that in the By-election of March 21st the United National Party won with a reduced majority of 7806 votes compared with its majority in the general election. It is clear that quite a number of urban middle class voters have been disillusioned by the policies of the present government. But at the same time it is also clear that these voters are not yet prepared to vote for the middle path (the SLFP) or for the Left (the United Left Front). In fact the SLFP candidate received 745 less votes than in the general election, while the votes of the ULF candidate increased only by 1216. We consider that the attitude of the workers, peasants and general masses to the UNP Government after eight months of its rule is vastly different. However, the results of this By-election are helpful in estimating the extent of change that has taken place in the ranks of the urban middle class."

On March 24, the weekly *The Independent* commented editorially as follows under the heading WARNING: "As expected the UNP raced comfortably home to victory in Colombo West, though dropping nearly 7,000 votes in the process. Over and above the majority being sliced, the most significant fact about the by-election was the crass indifference of the voter to Tuesday's polls. Although Colombo West boasts a total of 37,983 registered voters only 21,181 polled against the 37,509 (mistake! Ed.) in the General Election. This against the backdrop of Sri Lanka's reputation as being second only to W. Germany in voter turn-out at elections, registering 86.7 average polling, demonstrates deliberate disdain towards the by-election. Why

this apathy and unconcern towards an election that political pundits consider a revealing barometer of the UNP's standing in the country today. Colombo West is without doubt the most sophisticated, most politically conscious and literate constituency in Sri Lanka. Dominated by white collar workers, it is middle class to the hilt. In spite of this, nearly 40 per cent stayed home. A UNP victory was on the cards. A trek to the polls was therefore thought to be a superfluity. Obviously, too, the UNP performance to-date did not inspire: did not sound that clarion call to UNP faithfully necessary to pile it up at the polls and parade to the world that the UNP was the greatest. Political observers could also interpret the decline in voting strength as a silent protest against the UNP. Rather than risk a bloody backlash or an eruption of Violence (the latest reaction to defeat) thousands decided to play safe. Let the UNP win, they felt, but not by a massive majority. A smaller majority would serve as a public rebuke to the ruling Party jolting it to the realisation that it was not sitting as pretty in the saddle as it thought. If that be the correct interpretation of the silent or absent vote it is a well-deserved rebuke. After nearly eight months in the driving seat, the UNP has dallied and dawdled without alleviating the distress of the people, in the manner promised or expected. Significantly the SLFP vote has virtually stayed put while the LSSP has taken a stride or two forward from the last Elections. Normally, by-elections do not stir the public imagination. But Colombo West is not just another by-election. It is a signpost to the future and a mirror of the past. We believe that the people, though not quite happy about the UNP, as evidenced by the tell-tale turn-out, nevertheless still vest their faith in it, hoping that the lesson

of the polls will not be lost not only on its High Priests of the UNP but its acolytes as well."

On March 25, Gamini Navaratne had an interesting analysis in the *Sun* entitled THE LESSON OF COLOMBO WEST: "So the United National Party has retained Colombo West. None except the most wishful anti-UNPer would have expected a repetition of what happened in India, where the seat vacated by Mr. Sanjiva Reddy once he became President was captured by the Opposition. Nevertheless, I feel that UNPers should not be too jubilant about the result, despite the poor showing of the SLFP. With the same number of registered voters as at the July 1977 general election, i.e., 37,983, the UNP vote was down from 21,707 to 13,156, while the total 'anti-UNP' vote increased from 5,695 to 8,964. No doubt the absence of President Jayawardene from the scene contributed in some measure to lower the UNP poll. There was also considerable voter apathy, the percentage of voters who went to the polls being as low as 58.4, compared to 72.4 in 1977. Among the non-voters could have been UNPers who regarded Colombo West as being "safe" even without their participation. And the intervention of Mr. Navin Goonaratne, who until the other day was a UNPer, took away a chunk of party votes. But these factors alone cannot explain why the UNP registered a 60.6 per cent drop from 1977.

"The result as a whole, I believe, serves to highlight the fact that there is some public dissatisfaction with the UNP's performance so far, particularly in tackling the cost of living and unemployment issues. It was these twin issues that led to the undoing of the UNP in 1970. These same bread and butter issues were the ones that brought the UNP back to power

last year. Apologists would say that the UNP has been in office for only eight months and that there are five years and four months yet to go. We all know that. But time now has a habit of flying at supersonic speed, so that, if the UNP were to remain out of trouble, greater energy than hitherto would have to be directed to holding the price line and easing unemployment. For at the end of the UNP's term, the people will not want excuses, as they revealed in 1970. And as they did again with even greater vehemence in 1977. What about the Cabinet Reshuffle that has been round the corner from about January? This is the question I have been asked by many of our readers. The question, I think, is based on the expectation that with a new team Mr. Jayawardene could do better. I, too, share this expectation. But when the reshuffle would come or how deep-going it would be will depend on the President's assessment of his Ministers' performances, now under way. It may be that we might have a new Cabinet with the New Year!"

The *Sunday Times* of March 26 had a long analytical comment by JUPITER: "The Colombo West by-election held last Tuesday was as expected, won by the United National Party, which retained the seat. This by-election will, however, be remembered for many years to come for the following reasons which showed a departure from other elections. Firstly, of a total of 37,983 registered voters only 22,181 voted, thus showing that almost half the number of voters for some reason or other abstained. In 1975 in the Colombo South by-election there was a voting strength of 73,000 of whom 23,000 abstained from voting, and in the July 1977 general election 10,581 abstained. On a comparison of these figures it will be seen that in last week's by-election a large percentage of voters were not

anxious to go to the polls. Secondly, the winning UNP candidate obtained a majority of over 10,000 votes while in July 1977 the UNP won by a majority of over 17,938 votes. Thirdly, while all the Independents lost their deposits in this by-election, the SLFP which polled 3,769 votes in July 1977 polled only 3,024 votes last week. The ULF nominee in 1977 polled 1803 votes and this time the LSSP's Bernard Soysa obtained 3,019 votes. The three sets of figures given above, on the basis of an objective analysis tell a very clear story.

"The voters of Colombo West were not very anxious to vote for the simple reason that they had already cast their votes in the 1977 general election and wish the government to go on fulfilling the promises outlined in the election manifesto at the general election. The voters have their own lives to lead and they have their daily problems to solve and have indicated in very clear terms that there is no special reason for them to express their mind at this stage of the new Government. In the election campaign the UNP leader emphasised three important points. Firstly they reminded the voters of the inequities and tyranny committed by the Sirima Bandaranaike Government. Secondly, they emphasised the need for national unity, in particular communal harmony and the preliminary steps taken to ensure such harmony and the removal of the Emergency and other representative measures of the previous regime; thirdly they outlined the concrete steps taken to reconstruct the national economy with a view to solving the unemployment problem of the youths. They emphasised the Mahaveli Project and the Free Trade Zone Project already started by the Government and summed up by requesting the voters to cast their votes for the UNP's youthful candidate in order to reaffirm their

faith in the UNP and to consolidate the steps taken for the economic rehabilitation of the country.

"As against this campaign of the UNP Mrs. Bandaranaike the leader of the SLFP and her speakers launched a furious attack on two main points. The first was that the UNP had deceived the people at the recent general election by giving false promises which had not been kept and secondly that the UNP government had removed the rice subsidy from the working classes. The LSSP and its allies also continued on the same lines on public platforms. Significantly however Mr. Bernard Soysa the candidate in his house-to-house operations carried on a more effective and subtle campaign very different from the public line. It was his position that Mr. J. R. Jayawardene the leader of the UNP would not mind his going to Parliament that he rendered public service in Colombo South for 21 years and that the voters were his relations and friends. In fact in his very personal message to the voters he did not for a moment refer to the policies of the LSSP or his left allies. In fact it is this skilful move that got him 3000 votes. In other words the 3000 votes that were cast for Mr. Soysa were substantially a personal vote. The SLFP public meetings were very well attended as at the general election of 1977. Its public meetings went on till very late at night—a privilege not granted to the opposition during the SLFP's tenure of office. The campaign the SLFP adopted was a repetition of a similar campaign followed in this country from 1953 Hartal days. The result was that the SLFP despite its very effective organisation canvassing and well-attended public meetings polled fewer votes than what it got at the general election although this time's SLFP candidate was more highly placed and had more meaningful backing from the party.

In the light of these matters the by-election result heralds the end of rice politics in this country. It also heralds the end of hate politics and spells the end of communal politics. The voters have reaffirmed their faith in two main things—that they trust the President of the country and his Government, and believe he will deliver the goods within the term of office and for this purpose he and his government should be left alone to do it in the best way he thinks fit. Secondly the youths have reaffirmed their demands once more that employment is more important than subsidised food. They have reiterated that they do not want charity from any government and they want only a decent job so that they could pay for what they get. No amount of hate and venom poured from Public platforms or picket lines or campuses can distract the attention of these youths from the faith they have in the President and this Government in carrying out the task of national reconstruction that has been long overdue. In short this by-election has disclosed that the voters have lost their faith in the SLFP and the Left guided by the saying that leopards cannot observe sil. To the SLFP this means a new situation has arrived for its party and the membership. Every member of the SLFP may ask "Can the party change under the same leader that lost the general election?" "Can extinguished volcanoes spew lava once more or should the membership look to new volcanoes or new leaders?" In the LSSP and the other Left parties it is said that the new elections to the Central Committees have shown a tendency to rely on youth rather than age. This by-election is a memorable one because it has proved beyond all doubt that the country wants reconstruction and not destruction."

This comment puts the UNP point of view most forcibly; and to some extent, convincingly.

Editorially, the *Sun* commented on March 27 as follows: "The victory of Mr. Anura Bastian of the United National Party on March 21 in the Colombo West by-election was a foregone conclusion. The victory was expected and apart from the fact that it registered that the UNP by no means has gone down in public esteem in its performance during the past seven months, the majority of 10,132 votes which Mr. Bastian gained points to the dismal failure of the opposition campaigns. The SLFP and LSSP did not campaign at the by election to unseat the government. Mr. Bernard Soysa conceded the fact that by winning one seat in the National State Assembly one cannot shake the position of the UNP which already then had 141. But what the opposition proposed was to register a protest against the policies of the government by winning the seat. While Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike was riding high on the false promises of the UNP in July, the LSSP's Mr. Bernard Soysa made a more sensible approach. He said the by-election was not an election for setting up a government. The loss of one seat could make no difference to the government. He called upon the voters then to use the by-election as a protest vote against the misdeeds of the government and a series of broken promises and differing policies for the past seven months. The outcome of the by election proves then to the hilt that the government in the opinion of the Colombo West electorate was not guilty of any misdeeds. The appeal for a protest vote has gone by default. Of course, as Mr. Bernard Soysa himself said the government needed an opposition that is strong. But there is a difference between having an opposition that is constructive in its

approach, and strengthening the hand of the government by its cooperation in matters above partisan level, and an opposition that is captious in its form and content and opposed for the sake of being opposed. Of course if the UNP had lost Colombo West, it would not have strengthened the opposition, but it would have added one captious critic to the handful that now keep mum in the Assembly yet carry the campaign to the Hyde Park Corner and the New Town Hall. The Colombo West electorate saw through the gag, and gave the opposition what it deserved."

On March 28, the *Daily News* published a comment by "a correspondent". "The following is an analysis of the Colombo West by election sent to the *Daily News* by a correspondent. The UNP at the Colombo West by-election held on March 21 polled 7,806 votes less than what it polled at the 1977 General election. This is to be expected as—(a) The total polled at the by election was less by as much as 5000 votes; (b) The new UNP candidate cannot by any stretch of imagination be compared with the previous MP for Colombo West; (c) the people particularly in urban areas, are at present at the receiving end of unpopular but yet essential steps taken by government in its effort to develop the country; (d) the Independent candidate, who came fourth with about 2,500 votes campaigned throughout on the basis of his contribution and association with the UNP. On the other hand the SLFP which polled 3,769 votes in 1977 against Mr. J. R. Jayawardene polled even less at this by election with a candidate who had better backing from the Party. Similarly the LSSP which polled 1803 votes in 1977 and improved by a mere 1216 votes at this by election with a candidate of the calibre of Mr. Bernard Soysa and

whose main campaign was based on the fact that Mr. J. R. Jayawardene would not object to his being elected to the National State Assembly. The fact that the UNP received almost 60 percent of the votes polled and that its majority of 10,132 is still more than combined votes polled by all the other candidates is clear proof that the people have re-endorsed the mandate given to the President and the UNP at the last General Election."

It will thus be seen that the LSSP felt that the by-election results showed that the reduced UNP majority showed that "quite a number of urban middle class voters have been disillusioned by the policies of the present government." But the LSSP was also realistic enough to say "that these voters are not prepared to vote for the middle path (the SLFP) or for the Left (the United Left Front)" "The Independent concluded its editorial note that "the people, though not quite happy about the UNP, as evidenced by the tell-tale turnout nevertheless, still vest faith in it, hoping that the lesson of the polls will not be not only on its High Priests of the UNP but its acolytes as well." The paper believed that the reduced majority and the low turnout was a "silent protest" against the UNP."

Gamini Navaratne summed up that "there is some public dissatisfaction with UNP's performance so far particularly tackling the cost of living and unemployment issues." He hoped that a Cabinet reshuffle might help the UNP to improve on its performances. Jupiter in the *Sunday Times* in a lengthy write-up argued that the results showed that the voters were with the UNP and pontifically concluded "This by-election is a memorable one because it has proved beyond all doubt that the

country wants reconstruction and not destruction." The *Sun's* editorial was a pedantic comment to have a swipe at the Opposition. The *Daily News* analysis ended up on a complacent and self-assured note that the fact "the UNP received more than 60 percent of the votes polled, more than the combined votes polled by all other candidates is clear proof that the people have re-endorsed the mandate given to the President and the UNP at the last General Election."

There is really no need for any further comment of our own. It is clear that the UNP still has the confidence of the voters, at least in a politically sophisticated urban electorate. The reduced majority and the low turnout are customary features of a by-election. It is equally clear that the voters are not impressed with the claims of the SLFP or the ULF.

Unity or even a no-contest election agreement between SLFP and ULF can be ruled out for the foreseeable future judging by the policies adumbrated at the LSSP conference and the CP's 10th Congress. Whilst the LSSP and CP want the ULF to lead an anti-UNP struggle, the SLFP, judging by SLFP speeches during the by-election and comments in their papers, has the ULF as its main enemy and only wanted to carry on a rear-guard defensive action against the UNP which is intent on undermining SLFP prestige by exposing its misdeeds in 1970-77 period.

The UNP wants an emasculated SLFP to tail behind it. It may very well succeed in this, and in this process there will be a fallout of SLFP Left and dissident elements, and it will be a moot question whether they will join the LSSP-CP's ULF or combine with

maverick organisations like the JVP or the Vama Sama Samajists to oppose the UNP and the "bourgeois" wing of the SLFP.

#### POST SCRIPT:

The (UNP) *Journal* of 31.3.78 has a front-page comment entitled LSESONS OF THE COLOMBO WEST BY-ELECTION has just come to hand. The rather lengthy article recounts a great deal of background material about the parties of the opposition, but the relevant passages state: "The victory of the United National Party at the Colombo West by-election, on March 21, was never in doubt. The poll was, of course, slack with 27,509 voting at the general election as against 22,181 at the by-election. This was the second-by election since the UNP government came to power. The first was at Dehiwala, on November, 11 last year when Mrs. Sunethra Ranasinghe was elected. A curious matter about both by-elections was the progressive decline in the votes of the opposing parties. In Colombo West the SLFP candidate received 3769 at the July 21 general election, while at the by election, the SLFP candidate received 3064. At Dehiwala too, the SLFP candidate polled 7795 at the by-election as against 9996 at the general election. The question is whether the SLFP or the LSSP has any standing in the country today? They have nothing, considering the response of the people to them. Much was made by parties opposed to the government about the withdrawal of the rice ration book from certain categories of wage earners, but the results have testified to the fact that the effect of this propaganda has been negligible. Meanwhile, the atrocities committed by the last government of Mrs. Sirima Banarajane under emergency rule and the incarceration of people under it, and the military and police atrocities perpetrated

appeared to be still fresh in the public mind and proved more effective. Another comedy by-election revealed was the attacks on each other by the SLFP and LSSP... The Colombo West by-election has shown quite unequivocally that it is the end of the road for both the SLFP and the LSSP. It was apparent to impartial observers of the party machines that the time was up for the aging leaders of the LSSP. At the same time it must be mentioned that the policies of the UNP have been completely vindicated. The public are willing to give the party, more time to pursue its objectives and restore this country to a position of strength. Colombo West has emphatically endorsed all these promises expressed in the UNP manifesto, which the party is determined to fulfil before its term elapses."

**This complacent confidence, on the part of the UNP, is reassuring, but the leaders of the UNP must also learn to read the writing on the wall.**

The Recorder

CARAVAN FAMILY—6

## On To Batticaloa

by Ina Trimmer

Uncle Raja was a fine guide. There was nothing he forgot or left off. They went by motor boat across the Samudra, to the other side, eleven and a half miles away. How they enjoyed chugg-chugging over the water which lay all round, like in huge basins. "The jungles on every side of the tank are a sanctuary for beasts and birds" said Raja. "Do you know the meaning of that word?" he asked Ranjit.

Before Ranjit could reply, Nila answered.

"I know, Sanctuary is a place where wild animals can go and be safe."

"Go up top, clever girl. Top of the class for you."

Ranjit cleared his throat. He didn't like being at the bottom while Nila went up top.

Mummie sat with binoculars glued to her eyes, exclaiming—"Ah, there! There goes a painted stork. That's an Egret. Oh! bother the Did-you-do it, frightening all the other birds with his noise."

Screaming like a banshee flew the Did-you-doit.

"What a wonderful bird!" said Ranjit, "He's talking asking did-you-do it".

"Sonnie that's why he is called a did you do it. He is always asking that question. He's the curse of the hunter. How often when I've missed a shot that wretched bird fools me, "did you do it?"

The pelicans intrigued the children, most of all.

"What do they carry in their pouches, under those huge beaks?" asked Varuni.

"Fish" said daddy.

Mummie would have liked to stay on at Inginiyagala but daddy was adamant. "We must move on" he said. "Time's running short and we have far to go."

So the next morning they packed up their tents like the Arabs and silently moved away. Uncle Raja stood at his gate with a packet of sweets for the children.

"My cook made these. Try your teeth on them Sonnie boy, Madame Fairy goodbye. Come again Dicky. Come again", and so they went on their way.

Daddy lit a cigarette. "Next stop Batticaloa".

They passed through Amparai already awake and busy and at Karaitivu on the main road turned left for Kalmunai and Batticaloa.

"Now I have a friend to contact" said Mummie.

"Who? who?" asked the children. "Is he nice as Uncle Raja?"

"It's a she, not a he."

"Aiy-O-O" said Ranjit. "I don't like shes."

"Ah! then you don't like me?"

"You are different mummie. You are not a he or a she. You are mummie."

Mummie gave him a hug. Jason began eating up roads again.

"Here's Kaladi bridge", said daddy. "The famous bridge of song, not sighs."

"What on earth do you mean?" asked mummie.

"This is the place where you hear the fishes sing."

"Fishes sing?"

"Yes, Ranjit. If we are lucky we should hear them tonight."

The children became excited.

"Do they dance also?" asked Nila.

"I'm sure they must", answered daddy. The lobster quadrille.

They entered Batticaloa and daddy got Simon to drive past the lagoon towards the sea, some distance beyond the town.

"We'll park at the Bar", he said, as they drew up close to the sea which glittered in the burning sun like a great blue sapphire. Yellow sands separated it from the lagoon only a few yards away as if it was afraid to cross the strip of sand and face the tumbling, angry waves.

The pitiless sun beat down on poor old Jason. They looked about for a shady spot and drew up near the old, Bar Rent House. It was certainly a lovely place with the sea and the lagoon so close together, but oh Heavens! the heat!

Daddy unloaded the tent, ayah and Simon started on the lunch, and then they went back to town in search of mummie's friend.

"Can you remember where she lives?" he asked.

"Mahes told me their house is next door to the Eastern College where her husband is principal!"

"It shouldn't be difficult to find them."

In no time he located the college and the house next door. They drove in under a strange looking portico with thatched roof and four pillars made of old trees planted into the ground. He tooted the horn. After sometime a plump lady came out dressed in a red sari.

Mummie jumped out "Mahes!"

"My goodness! It's Villia! Where did you come from?"

They embraced and kissed, and kissed again.

"My! what a wonder! who are these?"

Mummie introduced daddy and the children.

"Come! Come! Sit down, I'll go and call my husband. It's Saturday so he's at home. Kumar! Kumar! Where are you. Come quickly."

A tall commanding man came out, in a white verti and white vest. Introductions again.

"We haven't met since the day I was bridesmaid at your wedding" said mummie.

"You have hardly changed at all. You look younger than ever."

"Mummie smiled shyly. That's because I'm not fat."

"Unlike me" said Mahes. "I'm a size".

Three children came running in through the gate.

"Ah! Here are our children. We have two boys and a girl, almost the same ages as yours."

Then came the question. "Where are you staying?" and the usual reply from daddy—"Here", pointing to Jason. Of course Jason was inspected with *ohs* and *ahs* of admiration.

"How long are you staying?" asked Mr. Selvadurai.

"Two or three days".

"All right. We must show you Batticaloa, so you park Jason at the Bar and leave him there, and we'll take you round in our car".

Daddy and mummie thanked him. Tonight we'll go out to hear the "singing fish."

Varuni, Ranjit and Nila forget to be shy.

"When? When? what time?"

"After an early dinner with us", said Mahes.

The canoe waiting at the edge of the lagoon seemed hardly enough to take them all, but they packed themselves in. As the boatmen pushed off, the dark water suddenly turned into a lake of fire. Each ear dipped into gleaming, blue-green light, as if a million fire-flies were imprisoned in the water. Every one gasped with admiration. The boat left behind a glowing path.

"Some nights it's like this, with phosphorous. You are lucky to see it". Said Mr. Selvadurai. "Now listen! The singing fish!"

The boatmen stopped rowing and the canoe rocked gently in the swelling tide. From below came faintly a sound like that of a stringed instrument softly bowed.

## IN LIGHTER VEIN

# Two Poems

by Mervyn Casie Chetty

### JUSTICE ON WHEELS

February 22,

A Justice on a cycle is a most refreshing sight,  
From the chilly isolation of the great judicial height.  
This simple activity seems a bridgeless gulf to span,  
When awesome justice reaches down to meet the common man.  
On the street where we encounter weary blocks and risky thrills  
With the traffic moving madly over potholes, bends and hills;  
The pedestrian on the highway giving not a tinker's cuss,  
And the tardy bullock driver hogging lorry, car and bus.  
Oh how pleasant the assurance that the judge feel and know  
At first-hand the many problems that afflict us mortals so!  
From the stern unbending presence it reflects a healthy change  
To see justice moving freely through the common people's range.  
Building confidence, reliance on the law—it means so much  
That the awe-inspiring presence has not lost the common touch.

### THE RIGHT OF JUDICIAL REVIEW

March 12,

While mobile justice cast around its keen judicial eye  
And well accepted tenets to my sonnet did apply,  
It seemed to spot a bias for the leisured upper class  
Who ride at speed in limousines regardless of the mass.  
Of poor pedestrians crowding on the pavements and the street,  
Or crossing heated highways in their bare unshodden feet;  
Of those who deftly balance in an over-loaded bus  
'midst thugs and drunks and pickpockets, yet pay without a fuss.  
I must confess my vantage point has been the driver's seat,  
Tho' mother earth each sunny morn receive my naked feet.  
I live among the rugged poor, the toilers of the deep,  
And others of their ilk for whom life is so hard and steep.  
But already do I recognize the weight and credit due  
To the judgement of a well-trained mind—to Judicial Review.



in many graduations of pitch from the deep wonk-wonk of the double bass to high-pitched violins. From the depths came the music, sometimes loud, and clear, then dying away only to start again.

"First the dawn chorus and now the fishes orchestra! Wonderful!" said Mummie.

"Mermaids singing", said Nila.

## PUBLIC SERVICE—5

# Proposals For Consideration & Conclusions

by A Special Correspondent

The first thing that should be done is to immediately abolish the two Boards. They serve no purpose and I doubt if any single public servant would like their retention. In point of fact their continuance will be detrimental to the healthy growth of a strong public service. Naturally if these two Boards are abolished, there should be no vacuum. Thus the following suggestions are made for consideration when the next Amendments to the Constitution are taken up: (1) Section 106 of the Republican Constitution should be repealed. The Cabinet of Ministers should not be responsible for the public service; (2) As advocated by Dr. Ranjit Attapattu (a former public servant himself), MP for Beliatta, a PSC should be set up immediately on abolition of the two Boards. All the functions vested in the Cabinet of Ministers under section 106 of the Republican Constitution should be vested in the PSC now created; (3) This PSC should consist of 5 members, 3 of whom should be former Judges of the Supreme Court. One of the other 2 members may be a senior retired officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service and the other a retired senior officer of one of the

professional services; e.g. medical engineering or accountancy; (4) The Chairman of the PSC should be one of the judges; (5) The term of appointment of the members should be limited to six years, without any expectation whatsoever for re-appointment. None of the members should be removed except on a vote taken in the NSA and passed by a 2/3 majority; (6) The appointment of the members should remain with the President at his sole discretion; (7) Provision should be available to enable the PSC to frame regulations and to determine how its powers shall be exercised, for instance, by a delegate.

These suggestions are being made because it is now an absolute need to have a public service that would be a healthy check on political compulsions which a politician may not be able to resist. For example the public service standards should be so high as to enable a state officer to even advise government against hasty or illconceived legislation. The Senate was abolished and this country was given a unicameral legislature. The reasons for setting up the Senate is discussed in Chapter XIV of the Soulbury Commission Report. Two of the reasons are: (a) It would serve as a check on hasty and illconceived legislation; (b) Persons of eminence and position with high educational and intellectual attainments and possessing notable professional or administrative qualifications would be available to the nation.

In the absence of such a check, it would seem desirable to have an alternative. Graham Wallas in *Human Nature in Politics* says that "the real second chamber, the real constitutional check in England is provided not by the House of Lords or the Monarchy but by the existence of a permanent Civil Service appointed on a system independent of the opinion

or desires of any politician and holding office during good behaviour". This lends further support for the creation of a healthy public service, and more so because the constitutional check of the Senate is not now available to the country. In abolition of the Senate, our legislators apparently were influenced by what Abbe Siyes had said of a second chamber "If a second chamber dissents from the first, it is mischievous, if it agrees it is superfluous". It is to create such a strong public service that the suggestions have been made.

## NSA AUTHORITY OVER THE PSC.

The next, and important, point to be considered is the mechanism by which the PSC can be made answerable to Parliament. This is indispensable and imperative. This was the supreme infirmity of the PSC under the Soulbury Constitution and subsequently under the Independence Constitution. In moments of decision the PSC should almost automatically ask itself whether it could justify its action if it is called upon to do so in the NSA. This is the only safeguard against what could sometimes turn out to be irresponsible behaviour by the Commission, however eminently constituted it may be. Parliament is the citizen's shield (a state officer is first a citizen) against any form of tyranny or executive injustice. How can this be achieved?

This is possible only if a Cabinet Minister is made responsible to the NSA for the actions of the Commission. Jennings in his *Cabinet Government* has written "It is not entirely an accident of history that the Prime Minister is also First Lord of the Treasury. Though departmental Ministers have particular responsibilities for their departmental officials, the civil service as a whole is controlled by the Treasury under the direction of the Prime Minister as First

Lord". The door plate at No. 10 Downing Street is inscribed not 'Prime Minister' but 'First Lord of the Treasury'(37)

At the time of the Fulton Committee, 1966, the British Treasury was responsible for recruitment policy while the Civil Service Commission did the recruiting. The Fulton Committee recommended a fundamental change and since it relates to the relationship of the Commission to the Prime Minister I am quoting the recommendation: "*The creation of a new Civil Service Department raises the important question of the relationship between the Head of the Civil Service and the Prime Minister. Today the Prime Minister has direct responsibility for senior appointments. It is our strong hope that the Head of the Civil Service will maintain his present responsibility for these matters reporting direct to the Prime Minister.*"

While making this specific recommendation the Committee felt that the Prime Minister will need ministerial support to discharge this responsibility and recommended that he "should delegate day-to-day responsibility to a non-departmental Minister of an appropriate seniority who is also a member of the Cabinet". The delegation, it will be noticed was in respect of "day-to-day" responsibility.

The same trend has been reported in respect of the French Civil Service by Ridley and Blondel. This is what they have stated: "*In order to achieve greater unity... reforms modelled on the British practice were introduced shortly after the war. A civil service division was created in 1945. It was placed directly under the Prime Minister.*"

Although in Britain and France the Commission/Institution in charge of the public Service has been placed under the Prime Minister, it does not seem either neces-

sary or practicable in Sri Lanka to place the PSC under the Prime Minister. The writer is of the view that the need for Ministerial responsibility for the actions of the PSC will be strictly limited. All that seems necessary is to place the department of the PSC under a Minister only in order to make the PSC responsible to the national legislature and be answerable to it for its actions. The Minister need not have any more powers than those which would enable him to be answerable to the NSA for the PSC. Therefore it is suggested that the Minister in charge of Public Administration be the Minister who will answer for the PSC in Parliament.

#### INDEPENDENCE OF THE PSC.

The question naturally arises whether the PSC should take orders from the Minister. The entire purpose of setting up another PSC with the functions suggested will be completely lost if the Minister is given power to direct the PSC in regard to the discharge of its functions. He should have no such powers. The independence of the PSC should be secured further by the provision of a clause similar to section 56 of the Independence Constitution quoted earlier in this paper. The government itself has declared in no uncertain terms its determination to keep the public service clear of political involvement. Section 12 of the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister (Mr. J. R. Jayewardene at that time) reads: "*Members of Parliament should not interfere directly in the administrative affairs of Government Offices and Corporations in matters that may lead to the principles of fair play and justice being negated or result in obstruction of work.*"

It would be a salutary provision too, if the PSC is empowered to report to the NSA if the Minister

in charge or any other Minister attempts to use pressure on it in order to secure an advantage for any individual.

As far as the PSC itself is concerned, it should have mandatory powers to secure compliance of its orders and decisions. In the event of a conflict of opinion, the matter should be reported to the Minister in charge of the department of the PSC who must table all papers in the NSA and the decision of the House should be final. One cannot conceive of a better method of securing justice. Administration should be open. Even the Fulton Committee was constrained to observe: "We think that the administrative process is surrounded by too much secrecy. The public interest would be better served if there were a greater amount of openness".

Many members of the NSA have expressed lack of confidence in the public service and also with its attitude towards the members of the public. Else, why was the sub-committee appointed by the House to probe activities of public servants and also to entertain representations. No right thinking person can blame the NSA for taking this action. The writer is of the view that this step has come late. The public has been disgusted with the service it receives from its servants. Whether it is the post office counter, the co-operative outlet, the police station or the hospital, members of the public are very often treated with such contempt and discourtesy, that makes one wonder whether governments (from the time of independence) had abdicated their authority and allowed the public servant to harass and tyrannise the public. But it is a national tragedy that eminent members of the NSA should have to waste their time probing administrative malpractices and injustice, when

their entire time should be available to the legislature and to the electorate.

An efficient PSC with adequate powers is the solution. The government cannot be expected to waste its time on this exercise. Bagehot has written "The Cabinet is a hyphen which joins, a buckle which fastens the legislative part of the state (the NSA in our case) to the executive part (our state service) 'In this situation it is important that the legislature has at its command the 'executive part' fully geared to translate the political decisions into speedy and effective action. Government is not a mere artifice, but part of a natural order required to discipline man because he is not able to discipline himself. Because of man's self seeking nature, instruments of social control are required. One such instrument is government which can check man's anti-social tendencies and it's agent is the public service. Only an effective PSC can ensure this.

**CONCLUSION.** In this article I have attempted to show the need for a politically neutral public service, if government's political decisions are to come to early fruition so that the people will be the beneficiaries of the government's programmes. In this country the people have very clearly accepted the principle of party government. Over the period of the last 30 years since Independence the political maturity of the people has been much in evidence. Governments that faulted of their promises at election time have been turned out of office in the most unceremonious fashion. It has happened to the UNP and it has happened to the SLFP and the ULF. The one continuing institution has been our public service. France since the end of World War II had the misfortune of unstable governments until the colo-

nels revolution in Algeria brought General Charles de Gaulle to power with his famous declaration "I am ready to assume the powers of the Republic". Italy has had 40 governments since the end of World War II. Clearly it is the steel framework of the public service of these two countries that sustained them during those years.

In our own country, Sri Lanka, governments have not fallen with such rapidity. The swing of the political pendulum has been fairly consistent. But unfortunately, the public service has become so unstable, unsure of it's role, uncertain of it's duty and saddest of all, completely lost it's sense of dignity and independence. The public service is being attacked on all sides, perhaps not without cause. In the *Daily Mirror* of 19.02.78 a correspondent has this piece to say:

*"Some (bureaucrats), the obsequious ones will fawn on and cringe before the high ups to remain in power to enjoy all that is best in life, and others will sabotage, squeal and thieve to achieve the same end.*

*None will want to serve the public. Together they will destroy any government, being careful to preserve their own selves.*

*Their method of silencing the politician is obsequious mystification.'*

The same paper attributes to Mr. G. V. PUNCHI Nilame, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee appointed to probe into "the activities of the bureaucrat, the following remarks with reference to the bureaucrats: **"Hit hard. These are people who have destroyed all successive governments, but this time we have declared war on them. We will smoke them out"**.

This is more easily said than done. "Every department wages a paper war against it's Minister. They try to drown him in paper

so that he can't be a nuisance". Anthony Sampson attributes the following comment to Ian Macleod, one of Britain's leading politicians who in course of time was expected to be Prime Minister. **"Ministers can be divided into those who run their departments and those who are run by their departments. I believe Parliament finds out jolly quickly into which categories Ministers fall; and the Civil Servants know within 48 hours of the Minister putting his foot over the door step."**

It is the duty of government, at least in it's own interest, to promote a strong and an intellectually honest public service. Political chameleons must be rooted out, and no one else but the government can do this. It is useless for a Minister to have around him, state officers who will "fawn and cringe...or squeal and thieve". The advice given by Herbert Morrison in this regard cannot be improved upon: **"To discourage honest official advice—whether in national or local government—is both foolish and harmful. Advisers who are mere yes-men playing up to the Minister in the hope of advancement are just as dangerous as are obstinate and obstructive men. Both types are bad"(\*)**

My plea therefore is for government to abolish the State Services Advisory Board and the State Services Disciplinary Board and to set up a NATIONAL STATE SERVICES COMMISSION with wide powers and assured independence. Members of the NSA and the government will very much like to have officials who will be prepared to tender correct advice, regardless of any consequences to themselves. This can be expected only if the public service is protected by an appropriate agency of government such as the NATIONAL STATE SERVICES COMMISSION sugges-

ted. If the suggested provision for the State Services Commission to bring to the notice of the NSA any attempt by a Minister or politician to influence is included, one can be assured that no one will ever attempt to influence the Commission.

When I started to write this article, I asked myself the question "Why am I doing this?" I have reached the tail end of my career in the public service. I have nothing personally to gain. I felt compelled to write this article, because I have spent the best years of my life in this service. I have had to watch with dismay and grief the steady erosion of public confidence in the public service, it's present disarray, it's disregard of norms of behaviour which the public has a right to expect from it's servants, it's pandering to the political panjandrums who are on the stage today and will be forgotten pretty soon with the swing of the political pendulum.

Those state officers who will continue for many more years in the public service had better take a fresh look at themselves, and as our President declared recently, "turn the searchlight inwards" and make an effort to keep faith with the people of this country. I am reminded here of a beautiful poem of Robert Frost:

*"The woods are lovely,  
dark and deep*

*But I have promises to keep  
And miles to go before I sleep  
And miles to go before I sleep"*

When we join the public service we undertake a journey during which we have many "promises to keep" and it is my earnest prayer that the government will set up the necessary machinery that will ensure and make this possible.

Is the public servant to blame for anything and everything that goes awry? The emotional strains

that a public servant is subject to is expressed most poignantly by Derek Morell, an officer of the Administrative Class of the Home Civil Service in Britain and I feel disposed to concluding this article with what he has written so that in dealing with the public servant, the political master will exercise greater understanding, sympathetic appreciation of the constraints under which he is compelled to work and of the need of firm assurance that his career will not be affected if he tenders proper advice but carries out political decisions as if they were his own:

*"Speaking personally, I find it yearly more difficult to reconcile personal integrity with a role which requires the deliberate suppression of part of what I am. It is this tension and not overwork, which brings me regularly, to the point where I am ready to contemplate leaving a service which I care about very deeply.*

*But the price the public has to pay is even heavier. For that part of ourselves which we are asked to suppress is the creative part. There is nothing more individual than an idea. No Committee ever has, or ever will, form an idea. It can only adopt one. Ideas are formed by individuals from the depths of their personalities: they have to be felt before they can be brought to consciousness. And they often have to be sustained over long periods, not infrequently with a modicum of passion, before a process of critical appraisal by others defines their realisation as a valid object of public policy.*

*I reject the many smears to which we are subject. But I accept as valid the charge that creative administration is not our strong point; and I accept the charge, which is really to say the same thing in different words, that we often seem insensitive to the needs and feelings of the governed,*

*valuing the integrity of our system more highly than the integrity of those whose needs we exist to meet. I do not however accept that we behave like this because we are personally insensitive or personally lacking in creativity."*

Loyalty is indeed a virtue, but loyalty can easily turn into conformity which can be a cloak for the self-seeking. It is essential that the public servant should keep his objectives clear. It is far better to wear out in the Service than to rust out. We have seen it happen before: it is happening now. As a member, yet, of the public service of our country and about which I care very deeply, it is my plea that the Government give serious consideration to the establishment of a NATIONAL STATE SERVICES COMMISSION, with its independence assured on the lines of the immunity conferred upon, and enshrined in the Constitution in respect of the Auditor General and the Commissioner of Elections. It is only such a COMMISSION that can build an efficient public service career system that will "develop a sense of responsibility and initiative among the permanent officials, who are more apt to become the allies of progress and not its enemies," because they too love this country that is our home, just as much as the politician does.

Concluded.

37. The Treasury—Rt. Hon. Lord Bridge (page 160); 35. The Government and Parliament—Herbert Morrison (page 327).

## BOOKS

## The Uva Experiment: Prime Ministers And The Press

### RELIGION AND RELIGIONS

Contents of Publication 3.

INTRODUCTION—Michael Rodrigo: RELIGION AND RELIGIONS IN SRI LANKA—Sevaka Lakshman Ranasinghe: RELIGION PURE AND UNDEFIED—Sevaka Patrick Joseph: EDUCATION—ITSELF A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS PROCESS—Sevaka Mathew Silva: VILLAGE RELIGIOSITY REVISITED—BIBILEGAMA — Sr. Milburga Fernando, s.d.s. LET MY PEOPLE STAY—Sevaka Frederick Perera: BUDDHA AND OPENNESS TODAY AND TOMORROW—The Ven. Bandarawela Devananda Thero: CAN A CHRISTIAN EXAMINE THE HISTORICAL MOVEMENT CALLED COMMUNISM—A RELIGIOUS PROBE INTO AN IDEOLOGY—Sevaka Michael Rodrigo, OMI.

The publication is published by the Sevakas of the Ministries School, Uva Diocese, Sri Lanka. "Bishop Leo Nanayakkara of Badulla (Uva) trains his own seminarians (ministry students) from January 1975, also at the suggestion of Rome, to have a complementary approach to theology, also a contextual theology also at the Uva Pastoral-Ecumenical Kendra."

### RELIGIONS AND RELIGION

Third Issue of the Bulletin Sevaka Sevana, School of Ministries (Uva), 14, Senanayake Mawatha, Bandarawela, December 1977, Price 3.50

The introduction to this Bulletin says that "it is precisely to analyse Religion in Religions that Bulletin III presents itself for sympathetic scrutiny and careful study". The articles are all of much interest and it seems to me that what is sought to be presented is the need for and how the "whole person" can become a reality in a confused World. Religion is obviously the theme but how many realise that Christ (the reference is to Christ because the bulletin is from a Christian institution) is not found by ascending to some exalted sphere of ecclesiastical purity and glory but by facing human suffering and pain in the web and anguish of every day life? The story has been told of an epileptic struggling on the streets of Oxford whom no one was able to help because the epileptic rejected them. In sheer desperation the people went to a nearby convent and very happily a NUN (by the name of sister Marion I believe) came along to help this poor suffering human being. On seeing the nun, the sick man smiled and went along with her saying that he had seen the face of Christ. Those sisters in the convent had lived with pain and suffering and knew nothing else and had clearly something of the Christlike quality in them. In order to make a "whole person", prudens and puritans who avoid the reality and harsh facts of life have no place. Christ himself did not shrink from the anointing hands that would have been shunned by his apostles then and now. The contributors to the Bulletin are taking a fresh look at the problems confronting this country. A general who cannot look beyond his own map-board can never be a great commander.

It was extremely refreshing to find that none of the contributors had attempted to preach. They clearly wish to provoke discussion and to scan the horizon, and have also evidently been influenced by that

great Pope John XXIII whose historic encyclical *Pacem in Terris* opened the windows of the Vatican. It was then that the winds of change gushed into its vaults and corridors blowing away the cobwebs of centuries. The Church, Roman or others, has never been the same again. For this the world must be grateful to him.

Sevaka Frederick L. Perera has expressed fears about the possible effects of the FTZ or Export Promotion Zone upon our culture and asks "is it not like losing our soul, the very soul of our people". Here we enter the area of metaphysics. None has been able to explain to me what the "soul" is. There is something inside us that makes us tick, something that distinguishes man from a computer perhaps. But what is it? Was it St. Augustine who wrote that he will not be able to find rest until his soul becomes one with the Maker? Why then was the soul projected into the dimensions of the flesh if man's only wish was for his soul to return to his Maker? Another belief is that the soul resides in a human being only so long as it wishes to remain there. The soul is said to leave one body and enters another just as much as a human being changes his clothes. It is a cycle they say.

Fate deals blows which only blind reliance on Faith can rationalise and life made tolerable if not meaningful. Those who walk the hard and stony pathways with bleeding feet, alone can know what it is to have the simple needs, if not the joys, of life. It is hard to believe that HE would have created so beautiful a world if HE had not desired HIS creatures to enjoy it. Would HE have given the stars their glory, the birds their sweet song and the flowers their fragrance if HE had not wished us to delight in them? So why should not the FTZ make life a little more joyful?

These are matters which perhaps the next Bulletin may wish to discuss.

On the other hand St. Seraphim of Sarov who died in the middle of the 19th century is reported to have said that since he knew God (how he could have known God is a mystery to me) he could say that it was worth suffering, for thousands of years every moment on one's life, in order to know HIM. Was it to know HIM that HE created man? And Sevaka Mathew Silva says that "birth is no accident".

The important thing is not to permit religion to be run like some sort of business enterprise with a graded priestly hierarchy administering it—this is repellent and drives people away from religion and if that happens, man will find himself enveloped by an incomprehensible nothingness. The human mind is hungry for something that is deep in terms of moral and spiritual development. For the very bare needs of food, clothing and shelter. It is not true that suffering ennobles character, happiness does that sometimes, but suffering for the most part makes men petty and vindictive. We have all seen that happen. Nietzsche remarked "Show me that you are redeemed and I will believe in your redeemer" So that what is wanted now is a Harry Drummond in whom others can catch a glimpse of the love of Christ or a Sister Marion in whom a dying man can see the face of Christ Himself as the epileptic did in the streets of Oxford.

This is not criticising the Bulletin. In fact I am grateful because it made me think. The Bulletin has re-inforced my conviction that "it is absolutely necessary to give religion its rightful position of primacy and its specific field of action. We must be prepared to defend this necessity at the bar of contemporary world opinion". Fortunately for us in this country

we have a Government that is doing this for us. In contemporary times, as in the darker periods of history, it is only the kind of faith that inspired Tennyson to write the following words, that can make us re-build for whatever future that is left, by turning away from the disenchantment of the past:

*Strong son of God, immortal love  
Whom we, that have not seen*

*Thy face*

*By faith and faith alone embrace  
Believing where we cannot prove.*  
Let us hope that future issues of this Bulletin will continue to have these perspectives before it.

D. D.

\* \* \*

## THE ABUSE OF POWER

By James Margach

(W. H. Allen, £ 5.50)

## THE PENCOURT FILE

By Barrie Penrose and Roger Courtiour

(Secker & Warburg, £ 5.90)

James Margach, who recently retired after many years as Political Correspondent of the *Sunday Times*, subtitles his book "The war between Downing Street and the Media, from Lloyd George to James Callaghan". In fact this theme is an excuse to reminisce about the prime ministers he has known, especially in their revelations with the Parliamentary Lobby. As such it is good value: modest even-tempered shrewd and dotted with first-rate vignettes and anecdotes.

Mr. Margach does not quite go back to the Lloyd George premiership, but includes him because throughout the interwar years he was still a major figure in British politics. Thereafter he knew them all, and there is even an intriguing photograph of the young Margach, dressed as a caricature reporter,

by the side of Ramsey MacDonald, listening to an orotund address by the local Provost, on the platform of Elgin railway station. MacDonald is enthroned on a luggage trolley; an unaccustomed dignity, it would seem. Mr. Margach tells us that, in his early days as Prime Minister, having no car himself, and none being provided by the state, MacDonald "moved to and from appointments by tram, bus or Underground and when really pressed for time he stood on the corner of Downing Street to hail one of the old taxicabs". How very unlike the home life of our dear Mr. Callaghan!

In general, Margach's tale is not very edifying. Few prime ministers have been able to establish, or at any rate to maintain, a relationship with the press which was honourable and profitable to both sides. Lloyd George was ruthless: "The Press? What you can't square you squash, what you can't squash you square." He was never squeamish in using the law to coerce, or proprietorial peerages to sweeten. He pioneered "methods of news management and opinion-forming to reinforce his personal power."

Even more professional in news-management was Neville Chamberlain, about whom Margach has a fascinating chapter, the most valuable in the book. He emphasises that Chamberlain, while "a man of the utmost integrity", regularly deceived the press by "misleading and inaccurate statements". He grossly abused the Lobby system of private briefings, the even more private briefings with "three or four true-blue Conservative papers", and of course his special relationship with Geoffery Dawson of *The Times*: "Quite simply, he told lies."

Margach thinks Chamberlain, once a decent man, was a clear

case of the corruption of power, which turned him into "the most authoritarian, intolerant and arrogant of all the Premiers I have known". He gives a gruesome picture of Chamberlain, "trembling and white with fury", thumping the table in Downing Street and shouting at the press: "I tell you that I'm not dictatorial, I'm not autocratic, I'm not intolerant, I'm not overpowering. I'm the most relaxed and understanding of people. None of you, I insist, must ever say I'm dictatorial again."

Churchill is classified by Margach as a press enemy, largely because he felt he could get his way by operating at a proprietorial level or, at most, condescending in lordly fashion to a few editors. He thus never got to know the ordinary journalists who write the stories; indeed he never held a Lobby briefing, and could be intolerably rude (Margach gives a painful instance) to reporters who approached him in a perfectly friendly spirit. Eden, too, neglected to set up adequate press-relations on a regular basis and then, when criticized made, the fatal mistake of turning to the telephone: "It became like a drug. After the morning papers reached Number Ten at 6 am he at once phoned proprietors, editors and writers to complain about items which he read as hostile."

Another aggrieved figure was Heath, who was unable or at any rate unwilling to develop a friendly working relationship with Fleet Street, preferring a Gaullist posture, and giving out far too little information. He, like Chamberlain, was arrogant and when, in the end, he needed the press over the Miners' strike, they would not come running: "it was the super-secrecy of his government which brought his own downfall."

Margach sees some premiers as innocent victims of the press, Macdonald and Alec Home in parti-

cular, on both of whom he writes perceptively. On the whole, the moral of his book is that the fewer newspapers a premier reads, the better. Here Balfour set the pattern, never reading any if he could help it. Baldwin followed suit, and Margach rates him as the best all-rounder in handling the press. He also has high praise for Attlee who never read any newspapers except *The Times* and, occasionally, the *Herald*. When press hostility was drawn to his attention, he was merely snubby: "That so? Suppose they've got to say something." Good tactics: the press has an answer to secrecy and hostility, none to indifference. Macmillan, too, preserved an attitude of Olympian detachment which served him well for most of his long premiership. But this was a front; unlike Attlee he could be hurt, and in the end was when things began to go badly wrong; then even he lost his cool: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are a disgrace to the profession...lies, lies, falsehoods." But of course the truth is that no system of handling the press can survive calamity.

It was, indeed, failure which turned Harold Wilson, once a gifted and highly successful manipulator of the press, into a bitter and impotent critic. As usually happens, he got a better press than he deserved in the good days, and a worse one when disasters struck. He made the mistake of reading too many newspapers and, still more foolishly, reading too much into them. He thus passed through the looking glass into a conspiratorial world from which he has not yet reemerged.

One incidental result of his wanderings there is *The Pencourt File*, a fairly low-grade enterprise which would never have got off the ground without Wilson's initial push. Penrose and Courtiour may or may not be reliable but they are sin-

gularly lacking in the gift of clarity. Their ramblings left me no wiser and little better informed about the Jeremy Thorpe business, and there is not much in common between their sticky melodrama and the real world of politics—exciting enough at times—so soberly set down by James Margach.

—Paul Johnson  
*Times*, London.

#### FOR THE RECORD

#### \*Civil Rights \*Vidyalankara

**Statement of Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka on hasty legislation and the rights of the people.**

The Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka is currently studying two important pieces of legislation which have significant implications for the civil rights and liberties of the people. These are the Parliament (Powers and Privileges) (Amendment) Law and the Special Presidential Commissions of Inquiry Law.

CRM will make available shortly the results of its study. In the meantime, however, CRM wishes to record its grave concern and disappointment at the undue haste with which these statutes were passed which has precluded the public and organisations such as ours from studying and commenting on the measures before they became law. Both Bills were presented in the National State Assembly only on the 30th of January 1978. The Parliament (Powers and Privileges) Amendment Bill was passed on 1st February and the Special Presidential Commissions of Inquiry Bill was passed on the 2nd of February. Both Bills had been categorised by the Cabinet as "urgent in the national interest", thus circumventing the usual constitutional requirement that a Bill must be on the agenda paper of the Assembly for at least seven days be-

fore it is debated. Representatives of CRM tried to obtain copies of the Bills while they were being debated, but neither had been received for sale to the public at the Government Publications.

Even the requirement of seven days provided for in the Constitution is grossly insufficient, as CRM has had occasion to point out in the past. The resort to emergency procedure in respect of Bills which do not appear to be of any pressing urgency is another matter which CRM has had occasion to protest against, the most recent example being the Second Amendment to the Constitution, which brought about the far reaching change of introducing a Presidential form of government, and which was rushed through Parliament as an urgent measure in October 1977 although it came into effect only more than three months later.

CRM wishes to re-iterate once again that democracy does not mean that people are permitted to exercise their vote once every so many years but are expected to keep quiet in between. True democracy requires that the people are enabled to participate in the decision making process of government at every stage practicable, and an opportunity to consider, debate and make representations on proposed legislation is crucial to this. Indeed, this principle has been expressed on our Constitution, which states that.

"That State shall strengthen and broaden the democratic structure of Government and democratic rights of the people by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate at every level in national life and in government..."

This principle was regrettably disregarded in many instances by the very government which enshrined it in our Constitution, and we note with concern a similar

tendency in its successor. To make the record straight, we must say that the present government has called for representations on future constitutional changes by a well formulated questionnaire, and the Select Committee on the Revision of the Constitution gave individuals and organisations, including our own, an oral hearing in support of their views. We welcome this action, as well as the decision not to rush the measures through before February 4th as had earlier been planned. We trust that our request that the draft constitution be available for discussion will also be granted. We also welcome the publication by the Government of the White Paper on Employment Relations which affords the people an opportunity to study and consider this important proposed law.

We urge the government to follow this principle in all legislation, and to refrain from resort to the "urgent in the national interest" provision of the Constitution except in cases where it is demonstrably necessary.

R. Siriwardene Secretary

**Statement issued by the Student Council of the Vidyalandkara Campus of the University of Sri Lanka regarding the incident that took place on the campus premises on March 16th 1978.**

It has become apparent to us that the unfortunate incidents which took place at Vidyalandkara on the 16/3/78 have been grossly misreported by certain newspapers and the mass media which has taken great pains to mislead the public. That the authorities are striving hard to fasten all the blame for the tragic situation on the progressive student body is obvious judging from the various statements that have been made. For example in the Lankadipa of 17/3/78 it was reported that "Vidyalandkara Campus students have murdered an innocent bystander" this being

a statement issued by a top ranking official with a view to discrediting the students. It is in this context, since the Capitalist mass media has painted a maliciously distorted picture of the situation to the people, that we as members of the Student Council feel it our duty to put forward the truth—the unbiased facts of the case—for the information of the people.

In analysing the background to the unfortunate happenings at Vidyalandkara on the 16th March we cannot restrict ourselves to the few days preceding the episode because then the picture we paint would be both inaccurate and incomplete. In fact the then President who was appointed by the present government after they came into power, displayed qualities of inefficiency and partiality which aggravated the situation considerably. From the time of his appointment he followed the instructions of the Samavadi Student Front (which is the official UNP student union), often going against the academic and non-academic staff and students. He even disregarded and rejected the Student Council while examples of his attitude can be found from the following actions he took while in office—prematurely dissolving the Student Council, effecting transfers of lecturers which left the students' education schedule in shambles and allowing political pressures to creep in to the administration of the campus. Even the Vidyalandkara University Teachers Association had to appeal to the President of Sri Lanka complaining that the administration of the campus had deteriorated alarmingly.

With the Campus Faculty elections which were held on 20/1/78 the friction between opposing factions reached a climax. In the election, of the 13 posts in the Arts Faculty, the United Left Front won 7 posts and the Samavadi Peramuna got 6. According to these results it was the legitimate right



## Vidyalankara Clash

of the ULF together with Science Faculty Students Union to form the Official Student Council. The President of the Campus however, refused to recognise these facts and even though the Vice Chancellor and other high authorities of the University were approached on this subject no official took any meaningful action on the matter. The Student Council which was formed by the ULF and the Science Students Union was declared illegal by the President and all other officials of the University of Sri Lanka. In the meantime the Samavadi Peramuna with or without the knowledge and consent of the officials launched a malicious and dangerous campaign to capture the power of the Student Council into their own hands. It was during this time that the Samavadi Shishya Peramuna (Samavadi Student Front) made use of UNP thugs to intimidate and assault the ULF leaders on many occasions. Some students were forcibly stripped of their beards and given hair cuts in retaliation for their being sympathetic towards left wing political ideology. In addition to this the Samavadi Students followed a daily routine of bringing a group of thugs into the campus premises to threaten the ULF leaders.

In this connection, though the Campus Security Office, the President of the Campus, the Vice Chancellor and the Peliyagoda Police were informed of the situation many times, no one cared to intervene.

At this stage when a tense, volatile instability prevailed in the Campus, on 15/3/78 in the late evening some of the Samavadi Peramuna leaders had threatened a few of the ULF leaders saying that on the following day (16th) at 9.00 a.m. outsiders from the UNP would come into the premises with a view to beating up and killing them. As if to prove that this was no idle boast, on the fol-

lowing day—the 16th March 1978—from 7.30 a.m. onwards outsiders assembled opposite the Campus while some of the mercenaries were brought to the spot in official government vehicles.

Acting on the threat received the night before and on the evident activity of disruptive elements in the vicinity we felt there might be a clash which we wished to avoid at any cost. Therefore at about 8.30 a.m. that day, a complaint was lodged at the Peliyagoda Police Station and in addition we informed the Campus security personnel, student counsellors, academic staff and other officials of the Campus of our situation. As the President of the Campus was not present on that day through the student counsellors, the Vice Chancellor, the Peliyagoda Police and various other top Police officials were apprised of the exact predicament in which we were placed.

We would be guilty of being inaccurate and thereby failing in our duty if we did not add that despite the repeated efforts made by the staff and students to avert a clash they were unsuccessful because absolutely no co-operation was received in this regard from the Police, the President of the Campus and the Vice Chancellor. Be that as it may, from about 8.15 a.m. onwards on that day the Samavadi Peramuna with the help of their outside terrorists made repeated attacks on left wing students in the canteen area. Ultimately a gang of terrorists armed with swords, knives, clubs, bombs and other weapons entered the campus and attacked the students. As a result of the ensuing skirmish many students received injuries. According to information we have received official government vehicles were used to transport these thugs and a responsible official who belongs to the highest echelons of the government helped

considerably in the organisation of this attack.

Under the circumstances it is our considered opinion that the President and other officials of the university, the Government and the Samavadi Peramuna must be held collectively and totally responsible for this unfortunate incident and the resultant pathetic situation now prevalent. As such it is our earnest request and fervent hope that the people will not be tricked into believing the propaganda churned out by the mass media.

Even after this episode the Samavadi Peramuna and their allies have not ceased to behave in the same irresponsible and disgusting fashion. The Samavadi Peramuna has issued incorrect statements published in the newspapers to the effect that the environment surrounding Vidyalankara is tranquil, merely in order to lure the students back to the university so that they will become the prey of terrorists who will show no mercy. We shall inform students when the environment is conducive to the re-opening of the campus, but until then it is crucially important for the personal safety of the students that they are not hoodwinked by the false promises of these Judases.

To prove conclusively that the students are not responsible for the tragic incidents at Vidyalankara, to show that the real culprits are those who organised thugs and thus precipitated the crisis and to punish them suitably for there is blood on their hands, the Student Council makes a demand from the government that an Inquiry Commission be appointed to look into this matter. It is our humble plea that in the cause of justice and peace all parents and public organisations will join hands with us in supporting this request.

# Confidentially

## On Fish Again

IS IT ANY WONDER that *Tribune* should continue to harp on the scheme of the Fisheries Corporation to license foreign fishing fleets to catch fish in our maritime zone (outside a mythical 25-mile limit)? That it is such an outrageous scheme that it will undoubtedly spawn corruption on an unlimited scale? That the least we can do is to register a protest and place on record the dangers we foresee? That the scheme is so childishly naive (designed to enable foreign entrepreneurs to exploit Sri Lanka mercilessly that it reads like a page from the Arabian Nights Tale, or would it be more appropriate to say Grimm's Fairy Tales? That the Sunday Observer of March 21 reported: "Sri Lanka is opening up its territorial waters to foreign fishing fleets in an effort to provide cheaper fish to local consumers, the Minister of Fisheries, Mr. Festus Perera, disclosed yesterday. Foreign fleets may operate only in deep sea areas. An off-shore limit of 25 miles is being strictly reserved for local fishermen. In return for the right to fish in these waters, the companies are required to sell 40 per cent of their catch to Sri Lanka. Payment for this fish will be made in Sri Lanka rupees at agreed rates and Sri Lanka will take only those varieties of fish popular with the local consumer. The foreign companies must also pay the Government a royalty for the balance catch they are free to dispose as they wish. Mr. Perera expected a substantial reduction of fish prices locally as a result of this deal with foreign companies. The Minister believed that seer could be marketed at about Rs. 6 per pound and paraw at about Rs. 5 a

pound once supplies can be increased to meet demand."? That it would be interesting to know on what basis the Minister expected to sell seer at Rs. 6 a pound and paraw at Rs. 5? That in the same interview, he mentioned the names of three foreign companies with which contracts had been signed: one is from Hongkong, another from Singapore and the third from Japan? That already quips are floating around about the opportunities for Corporation representatives on the vessels to have secret numbered accounts in Hongkong, Singapore and Japan? That the Minister also confided "that if foreign ships were found fishing in the coastal fisheries area (25 miles from the coast) their licences would be cancelled immediately. In order to see that those foreign vessels did not contravene the conditions of the licence, officers of the Department of Fisheries would go on board as observers? He assured that Sri Lanka's deep seas would be open to foreigners only for one year within which their own crew would be trained in the art of deep sea fishing? That in the *Daily News* report on 29/3, he boasted that he had "invited foreign firms to fish in our deep sea and sell 40 per cent of their catch in varieties to be determined by him and the transaction to be in rupees. The foreign ships fishing in their deep sea would have to pay a royalty in foreign exchange at the rate of 25 US dollars per ton of lobsters, 15 dollars per ton of prawns and 5 dollars per ton of other fish." That the royalty this country will earn per ton is so small that the fish might well have been left to swim around in our seas? That US \$ 5 (Rs. 75) per ton (2240 lbs.) as royalty for "other fish" is a grave scandal and does not speak well of the negotiating skill of those responsible for these contracts? That \$ 15 (Rs. 225) per ton of prawns is an even bigger scandal? That already the "poor people of

this country", for whom the Minister is daily shedding tears, have not seen a prawn in months (although it was a common article of food a few years ago?) That the last government started the racket of exporting prawns to help a few favoured exporters to earn CRA? That this government is exporting more prawns—probably to help some people to collect commissions abroad by under-invoicing? That the reason trotted out over and over again by the Minister is that "his master plan to get foreigners to fish here is to give people fish at a cheaper price"? That this will prove to be illusory? That only the development of local fishing industry can solve our problems? That the Minister has now threatened to release the 200 tons brought in as a buffer stock by a foreign trawler? That the 200 tons will ultimately go to the rich and the five-star hotels via rich contractors who supply fish to these hotels at enhanced rates? That big ministerial talk about ending the exploitation by the local mudalalis has little or no meaning when more rapacious foreign mudalalis have stepped into the scene? That the real spicy business will start when "licence officers" from the Corporation are appointed to the foreign fishing vessels as "observers"? That Minister Festus Perera and the UNP have always complained that the Fisheries Corporation they inherited from the SLFP was a den of thieves full of corrupt and inefficient individuals and it is probably impossible for them to find suitable persons to be placed on board these licensed ships? That if suitable persons are not available in the Corporation, what next? That the important question is how these observers will know the 25-mile mark? That some of these gentlemen, being land-lubbers, may get sea sick and may not know what happens on the high seas?

## All Citizens Must Act To Stop Abuse of Food

When someone abuses foodstuffs for sale he is not merely making a big profit but is committing a crime against the health of the community. When someone or a group of people will knowingly sell adulterated foodstuffs which can lead to blindness or heart disease. Who suffers when this power is abused with milk or milk with their water?

The Administration Report of Colombo Municipal Council for 1958 (referred very recently) revealed that samples of many food items tested were adulterated. Butter—with emulsions of water and vegetable fats—brown— with maize and capric acid. Coffee— with wheat— with flour, cornstarch, potato or sawdust. Coffee powder— with powdered ground nut husk, starch. (as much as 25%). Instant tea powder with wheat flour, maize flour, sugar and a toxic substance.

**"Liberty and democracy have no meaning without equality and equality cannot be established so long as principal instruments of production are privately owned. Private ownership of these means of production thus comes in the way of real democracy."**

**—Jawaharlal Nehru**

Citizens Can No Longer Afford To Wait  
For The Authorities To Act

Food adulteration (some can be done at home by simple tests and others in public or school laboratories) can be done at home by simple tests and others in public or school laboratories (some can be done at home by simple tests and others in public or school laboratories).

And Demand Streamlined Legislation  
And Prompt Enforcement

SPACE DONATED

## All Citizens Must Act To Stop Adulteration Of Food

When someone adulterates foodstuffs for sale he is not merely making a big profit but is committing a crime against the health of the community. When coconut or gingelly oil is mixed with mineral oil it can lead to blindness or heart disease. Who suffers when chillie powder is mixed with sand or milk with dirty water?

The administration Report of Colombo Municipal Council for 1976 (released very recently) revealed that samples of many food items tested were adulterated: *Butter*—with emulsions of water and vegetable fats; *Arrowroot*—with maize and tapioca flour; *Chillie powder*—with wheat flour, coriander, poonac or sawdust; *Coffee powder*—with powdered ground nut husk, starch (to as much as 85%); *Turmeric powder*—with wheat flour, maize flower tapioca and a toxic coal tar dye material.

The maximum fine for adulteration under the Act is Rs. 200/-. The Municipality's Report stated: This fine is inadequate when I think the cumulative effect on the health of the community when food adulterated with substances like metanil yellow diluted in turmeric powder and formic acid diluted in vinegar are consumed by us."

## Citizens Can No Longer Afford To Wait For The Authorities To Act

Test Food samples (some can be done at home by simple tests and others in private or school laboratories at little cost) and expose the food criminals.

## And, Demand Streamlined Legislation And Prompt Enforcement