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Sri Lanka: Vietnam

SRI LANKA is awaiting the next Budget with a great deal of anxious awe. The Income Ceiling Bill has been gazetted. The Compulsory Savings Bill has been gazetted. Land Reform with fixed ceilings is now already part of the statutory law of the land. The Agricultural Productivity Act now seeks to regulate the activities of farmers and agriculturists in the matter of production. The Press Council Bill has been presented and the Government seems determined to push it through the National State Assembly in spite of opposition from many quarters. The estimates and the appropriation bill have been tabled, and the budget speech which had been scheduled for November 2 will now be delivered on November 5 (last year the Budget was presented on November 10 and the debate had gone on till past midnight on the day before Christmas eve).

The Minister of Finance is reported to have been ill—allegedly a victim of the new flu virus causing bronchial and pulmonary complications. New strains of dangerous virus have appeared on the scene in Sri Lanka. Cynics say that these many new types of virus are symbolic of the many afflictions which have been imposed on the country and the people in the new era of the United Front, but such remarks mostly come from people who feel that their privileges and rights have been clipped or eliminated by the socialist axe of the UF. But we are yet to find anybody who has fulsome praise for the

UF. In spite of grandiose legislation and a brand new Constitution, nobody seems to have got anything out of the UF except their Ministers and MPs (and their private secretaries); have got good cars cheap, Corporations Chiefs and a whole brood of other bureaucrats with the power to be corrupt. Ordinary people are daily confronted with high prices and a total lack of essential goods. They have so far not "revolted" against the Government because the alternatives do not seem desirable: the UNP or the JVP. And so the ordinary folk of Sri Lanka are bravely and patiently putting up with the current horrors devised by the UF bureaucrat, the co-op racketeer and the political contact man who seems to be able to get the impossible done, to find a loophole through every law and regulation, and who knows how to fix all licences and permits—for a price. The proverbial piece of straw broke the camel's back and this is something which the cocksure cheer leaders of the UF, transfixed with the messianic halo of socialism, will do well to ponder upon.

From the housetops and over the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation there are daily loud proclamations that Government was intent on increasing production and productivity. Statistics and reports are cited in support. The methodology is the same the UNP had adopted in the period 1965-70 reaching a climax in the few months before the General Elections. The SLEC is now keeping up a tempo of boastful claims about increased production and increased export earnings and even if part of these are true, Sri Lanka should not have any shortages of essential goods or any foreign

exchange difficulties. If one is to believe the Radio, tourists must be literally swarming and crawling through every nook and corner of Sri Lanka. But tourist earnings in foreign exchange have not yet made any impact on our foreign exchange assets. The high-pitch, high-key and high-profile boasting over the great victories of the UF have so far only succeeded in increasing the credibility gap which has firmly enveloped the government. What is not realised is that ceilings, compulsory savings levies and the like will initially tend to depress production—unless other steps are taken to re create production on a new basis. The Agricultural Productivity Bill cannot do this: newly fashioned super-bureaucrats even vested with special powers will flop as much as all other bureaucrats. *The highest priorities to achieve increased production and economic regeneration are the elimination of corruption and the enforcement of discipline. It is unfortunate but true that corruption and indiscipline at all levels have increased in the era of the United Front. And nothing has yet been done to stem the tide of corruption and indiscipline.*

ON THE COVER, we have a reminder about Vietnam. At time of writing, a ceasefire peace seems imminent. By all accounts Washington and Hanoi seem to have come to terms, but President Thieu seems to be in the way of a coalition in South Vietnam and a much broader peace will be delayed. The daily papers are full of news about Kissinger and Vietnam and we need not recount the ups and downs in the talks. We can only hope peace will be a reality in Vietnam however limited and restricted it is for a start.

What the I. M. F. thought of the 1972 Budget

by PERTINAX

THE NEXT BUDGET will be presented in a few days, on November 9 to be exact. There has been much speculation about what it would contain. It has been pointed out by many sources, nearly all of them official and semi official, that the Government had no alternative but to tailor the Budget to meet many of the requirements of the IMF and the World Bank—although no doubt there

will be a concerted attempt to camouflage many of the measures as being part of the "independent" action of the socialist UF government. People in Ceylon can easily see through such devious methods of asserting one's "independence and sovereignty" and the Government will only increase its credibility gap by seeking to persuade the people of Sri Lanka that its budgetary and fiscal policies are totally "independent" of IMF imperatives.

It would be interesting to read what the last IMF report had to say about the 1972 Budget presented on November 10, 1971. It set out the immediate background in this way: "Thus, the Five Year Plan fixes a target which assumes an increase of about Rs 3 7 million in Government savings in 1972 over 1970/71 (when translated into the budget presentation used by the Central Bank, and through this report). To reach the Government investment level, of 1969/70, with a bearable balance of payments, would require, we have seen, about a Rs. 372 million nominal public savings increase. Adequate investment levels during the Five Year Plan period, with constant net foreign aid,

a bearable balance of payments, and some increase in real wages in subsequent years would require about Rs 600 million increase in savings in 1972."

The IMF quite correctly emphasised that in order to implement the Five Year Plan, an increase in the public savings effort was essential—as envisaged in the Plan itself. The Report drew attention to the "magnitudes" of the economic requirements essential for a workable and practical budget to get the Plan off the ground. After stating these, the Report went on to examine the actualities of what had happened the previous year leading to the realities of the present. "As against these magnitudes, the 1971/72 budget (reduced to a twelve-month basis) yielded a current surplus of Rs. 192 million, i.e., an increase of Rs. 334 million from the previous year's level. This was about Rs 80 million more than was needed to reach a tenable payments position and would have allowed some real increase in resources to finance a real though modest recovery of public investment."

THEN THE IMF REPORT went on to discuss the main features of the 1972 Budget, presented on November 10, 1971, so far as its impact on the realities of Ceylon's requirements in fiscal and monetary matters were concerned. The 1972 budget had some major departures from the 1971 Budget and the IMF drew particular

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attention to these. "Nevertheless, the budget was in contrast to the previous year's performance. It constituted a significant reversal, touched a number of taboos, and contained declarations of intent. Thus a capital levy was announced and also a ceiling on rural holdings though the precise contents and dates of implementation of these measures are not yet known). A ceiling on the ownership of urban houses was also instituted, though it is perhaps not very drastic, as it allows, for instance, a family with three children to keep five houses of unlimited size. The proposed income ceiling of Rs. 2,000 per month will truly hurt the urban salary earners, but it will probably be more easily evaded by property owners, particularly land owners. In any case even that measure is not yet implemented, and the modalities of its application are not yet announced. As for the fee of Rs. 0.25 on out-patient visits financially it has mainly symbolic impact but it seems to have helped to ease the pressure on medical facilities. The greatest share of the additional revenue was to come from three parallel measures, all symbolically important and financially effective."

THE IMF, very approvingly, referred to certain measures which it considered very essential viz. the increase in the price of the second measure of rice, the increase in the price of sugar and flour. "The price of the second rice ration (which was restored by the pre-

sent Government after the elections;) was to rise from Rs. 0.75 to Re. 1. per measure i.e. close to the procurement price of rice. The price of flour was to rise from Rs. 0.33 to Rs. 0.48 per pound. A sugar ration of 2 pounds per person per month was to be instituted (the average consumption) is 3.7 pounds per person per month, not including annual industrial consumption of about 50,000 tons; outside the ration the prices of sugar was to rise from Rs. 0.72 per pound to Rs. 1.50 per pound."

But, as everybody knows there was an anti-climax. Within 24 hours of making these announcements the government went back on two of the most important of these measures. The IMF Report commented on this as follows. "The budget was tabled in Parliament on November 10. The following day the Government announced that the flour price rise was withdrawn and the sugar ration raised to 3 pounds- i.e. close to the average consumption. These revisions reduced the net impact of the budget, by about Rs. 243 million on an annual basis. Instead of a Rs. 192 million current surplus the target as it now stands will yield a Rs. 51 million deficit. While better than 1970/71, this would constitute the second worst performance in a very unsatisfactory history. As the budget now stands the fiscal position is visible only if investment remains at last year's abysmal level. Not even a token beginning can be made to-

wards the implications of the Five Year Plan; as the budget now stands, Ceylon has and can have no effective development program. This is in fact well recognized by the Government and the Finance Minister has repeatedly declared that the lost taxes will be fully replaced."

The Report thereafter discussed the question of the new taxes which the Finance Minister had said he would impose in order to make up for the fiscal measures he had been compelled to withdraw by UF backbencher pressures. "Where can the new taxes come from, from the point of view of administrative and political feasibility. Where should they come from, to improve the resource allocation framework? Fortunately, the answer to both questions is similar. Technically there are ample possibilities for further taxation. Even disregarding the fact that, in Ceylon, taxation finances large transfer expenditures, its weight has often been exaggerated. In particular much importance has been attached to some inter-country comparisons which ranked Ceylon relatively high from the point of view of the weight of taxation. According to the World Bank's "World Tables", Ceylon's tax to national income ratio is higher than that of Chad Dohomey, or even India, but lower than those of Cambodia, Jamaica, and Congo or Zaire, not to mention such highly taxed countries as Brazil or Senegal. More significantly,

Ceylon is one of the very few countries to have experienced a fall in the tax ratio over the past decade."

THE EXPERTS of the IMF then discuss the potentialities and possibilities of new taxation in Ceylon and devote a number of paragraphs to this question. They make interesting reading "Leaving aside such comparisons, it is better to examine the availability of taxable matter in Ceylon. First let us dismiss direct taxes as a substantial tool of fiscal policy. They present serious difficulties of assessment and implications; in their technically easiest form (contribution to provident funds) they have a negative impact on employment; there is a little room for raising them—especially when the Rs. 2,000 per month income ceiling announced in the last budget comes actually to be implemented. New direct tax measures—particularly capital levies—may nevertheless be desirable for socio-political reasons; but they will not bring in much in terms of new resources especially if one considers the broad savings picture and not just Government funds alone."

The IMF Report then examines the virtues of devaluation which it had been recommending to this country for a long time. Devaluation, as the Report points out, can be both direct as well as indirect. "One frequently discussed broad measure would consist in raising import prices across the board. Such a move (and an appropriate compensatory rise

of export prices) is in any case necessary. Given the incompressibility of nominal wage rates, the only way to bring real wage in line with the needs of export—promotion and import—substitution is to change the domestic-foreign price parity. But the revenue impact of such devaluation is not obvious. From the point of view of resources allocation most export prices need to be raised as much as import prices—indeed more, because they have lagged behind. The net revenue impact will be due to the possibility of taking some of the devaluation gains bank from tea exporters. With the current trade deficit of about \$660 million an increase of Rs. 5 per dollar in the amount paid for each commodity whether imported or exported would bring Rs. 300 million net additional resources. It will be less if the trade deficit is compressed as it must be. If one excluded imported rice which now goes into the first free ration, a devaluation's direct budgetary benefits would equal additional real taxation it would allow to impose on tea exporters."

The pundits from the IMF then go on to examine the inter-relation between taxation and food subsidies. What they have to say has a great deal of substance in them: "Trading price relations must be changed to improve resource allocation and to develop exports, for raising fiscal resources, however, specific taxes must be levied and specific subsidies

lowered. Increasing a tax is in many ways identical to reducing a subsidy. In Ceylon where many subsidies are covert, it would be futile to discuss whether a specific proposal really involves raising a tax or reducing a subsidy. This year, however, it is true that food subsidies weigh particularly heavily on the budget: Rs. 500 million net overt food subsidy in the last fiscal year, Rs 800 million if certain covert elements are taken into

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account e.g. non payment of FEECS in rice, wheat and flour and some other food imports); more than enough to provide all the resource needs of the first Plan year. At constant rates the subsidies increase in line with population which have resources quite fast in Ceylon. Cutting Government subsidies would have no resources allocation drawback, no cost of implementation, leave no possibility for tax evasion. One could easily mitigate the social impact of such a measure on the truly under-privileged the old and the disabled, notably their rations could be continued or even supplemented by cash allocations if that were desired."

But the Report asserts that food subsidies should not become obsessions and prevent attention being to new taxation over a wide area. "Attention to the food subsidies should not hide possibilities for taxation however. There is much scope for indirect taxes on other consumer goods, including some services and housing construction. The relative simplicity of Ceylon's economy and its heavy dependence on imports render such taxes easy to levy, to enforce and to administer. For instance, imported cloth can be taxed directly; factory produced cloth at the factory gate; handlooms at the yarn import or production stage. Simple metal goods can be taxed as imported steel sheets or copper; housing construction at the door of the cement factory. Technically,

it should be relatively easy to enforce these measures, in Ceylon's circumstances. There is no particular rate at which these levies need to be limited on technical grounds. However, both socio-political resistance and the possibility of evasion, notably through bribery or smuggling are likely to be relatively smaller if the tax is spread broadly, and bears the more moderate rates such spread would permit."

In this connection, the IMF refers to the very important question of price levels and the dynamics of taxation and what the Report sets out is based on premises with which few can quarrel. And the discussion on consumption and consumption patterns is even more interesting both to the student and the ordinary layman. "The price system is so thoroughly distorted that it is difficult to quantify the real importance of various types of taxable matter; nor is statistical information particularly good. Still according to the existing accounts food absorbed only 50 percent of total private consumption expenditures though as it is heavily subsidized, this is not very meaningful. In 1970 more than, Rs. 800 million were spent on clothing; more than Rs. 800 million too on transport; more than Rs 400 million were spent on recreation and entertainment. These Rs. 2 billion together should provide enough taxable matter to make it technically possible to raise the needed Rs. 700 million or so in taxes.

Of course, many of the goods and services included in those categories are also subsidized, price controlled, or both: for instance public transport and rationed cloth. Clearly it will not be possible to raise the required resources without touching those items, whatever the political impact or the social cost of doing so. There is simply not enough conspicuous consumption by the rich in Ceylon to raise investible resource without reducing the consumption of the not-so-rich though the consumption of the truly under-privileged—the old, the sick the unemployed—could quite easily be protected. Nor is it possible to raise enough resources while leaving intact the price of all mass-consumed goods though the price of any one category, conceivably even rice, could be left intact.

"Not that it should be. The combination of a free essential goods (rice) and highly taxed less essential commodities is particularly perverse from the point of view of resource allocation. If a man gets to eat for next to nothing but must work very hard to get himself a shirt he may well choose not to work at all (now, of course both food and cloth are subsidized). The best policy would be to spread the proposed tax measure quite broadly, to raise the price of rice and flour, the price of sugar and the price of cloth more moderately than if fewer measures were taken. Such a spread would also permit greater protection to be

afforded to more people. Certainly it should be possible to keep - or even to increase - the rations of those above 60 to continue taking care of the sick; and even of the genuinely unemployed.

Finally, in analysing the problems centred around the Budget the IMF deals with the question if bank and deficit financing so far as it was applicable to actual economic structure of this island. "Bank credit financing was not at all considered in the Plan. In the context of the present adherence to rigid price stability the past annual rate of increase in the money supply about 5.5 percent should not be exceeded. Physical shortages of current consumption goods, even of those which are rationed, are all too frequent already and the politically demoralizing and economically disruptive effects of such shortages are immense. At that rate only about Rs 100 million deficit financing would be permissible even if private credit expansion remained nil. However, allowing prices to rise would much enlarge the scope for deficit financing. If the Government imposed new indirect taxes, withdraw subsidies, and increased the cost of imports (though a formal devaluation or otherwise), thus systematically provoking a widespread price rise, it would also obtain large additional resources from deficit financing. Such deliberately provoked price rises should enable the economy to absorb an excep-

tional increase in the money supply of about Rs. 100 million in addition to normal monetary expansion. In effect what we are saying is that a substantial price rise would force upwards the balance of savings. These private savings would come up top of normal savings and could therefore be used by the Government. To make an exceedingly rough and ready evaluation, a first year effort consisting of Rs. 500 million in reduced food subsidies and indirect taxes and Rs. 100 million in increased deficit financing would seem appropriate. All these are meant to be in addition to revenue measures required to compensate for the rise of current expenditures."

SUCH ARE SOME of the comments of the IMF on the 1972 Budget and budget-making in general in a country like Sri Lanka. It will be interesting to see how much of this advice will be incorporated in the 1973 Budget which will be presented on November 2.

In earlier articles in this column attention has been drawn to what the IMF has had to say on certain aspects of the economy of Ceylon and the policies followed not only by the present UF government but also by the earlier UNP-coalition government of 1965-70.



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More about the By-Elections: The Case for the United Front

by SERENDIB

The *Nation* is now the only paper in the English language which speaks for the United Front. The *Forward* has not made its appearance after the mid-August upset in the elections to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Though the *Nation* is LSSP oriented, it speaks for the UF. The SLFP has no paper of its own either in Sinhala or in English, to put forward its point of view. One has therefore to fall back upon the *Nation* to understand the thinking behind a powerful and influential section of the Government and the United Front. Some of the daily papers reflect rightwing SLFP opinion in an oblique sort of way, but there is neither political cohesion nor consistent political thinking in the SLFP Right.

The *Nation*, on October 6, a few days before the by-elections cautiously offered its comments on them under the heading **THE PEOPLE DO NOT FORGET** in the *Notes and Comments* column. It was a kind of apologia asserting that in spite of the dirty propaganda carried on by the "reactionary" press the people will not

forget what the UF was and what it had tried to do. And on the outcome of the elections itself, it ventured to say: "For our part we do not need to hedge our bet. We retain our full confidence in the political sagacity of our people. The future of democracy in Sri Lanka rests on the existence of such good political sense in the mass of voters. We have never lost confidence in the ability of popular democracy to deliver the goods. We are not surprised therefore, at reports from the four constituencies that appear to have bowled over many reactionary propagandists and pseudo-revolutionary prophets of doom. Prices and scarcities it seems, are not the only factors that determine mass political choice. The people have not forgotten their oppressors and enemies or lost the capacity to recognise their friends

"Available reports from the four constituencies indicate that at the newspapers have not succeeded in distorting the image of the United Front among the people. They grumble at the increasing hardships they have to face and are disappointed by the waverings and inconsistencies of the Government in working out solutions to the

country's problems. But they have not permitted their difficulties and disappointments to obliterate their basic identification with this Government. They remember that the UNP, for all its tall talk today, is the party of their oppressors and enemies and can never reflect their own interests."

Without asserting that the UF would sweep the polls in the way it had done in May 1970, the *Nation* in its pre-election forecast emphasised that the people would not forget the UF and that the "wishful thinking" of the capitalist press that the UF would be defeated would not be fulfilled. The comment also took credit for the fact that the UF Government had decided to hold the elections so soon after April 1971. However the main burden of this note was that the reactionary press had "distorted" facts in order to mislead the people, and that in spite of this, the people will ensure UF victories. The *Nation* was thus confidently "cocksure" of the 4 by-elections.

The results however came as shock to most UF adherents, but the *Nation* naturally put up a bold front and endeavoured to "explain" the results.

The issue of the *Nation* of October 13 dealt with the by-elections on a apologetic note. On its front page was spread the statement of the Prime Minister. "MY MANDATE HAS NOT CHANGED" (Tribune published this statement in its

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Battle-lines Get Drawn in U. S. Elections

by **PROBHAT ROY**

AMERICAN Presidential politics is multi-faceted. At the core lies the vigorous pursuit of dominant interests and goals of the two major parties, the Democratic and the Republican. That is not all, however. The conflicting aims, aspirations and ambitions of the people and personalities composing the power-structure are no less relevant to the outcome of the contests. The theory of checks and balances in a model of American power is, of course classic. However, there is a certain flux even within the definitive programmes and policies, given the nature of pluralistic politics. How does the political syndrome look on the eve of the Presidential elections?

The five major problems afflicting the US and which form the essence of the political debate are: 1. Vietnam, 2. Busing, 3. Amnesty, 4. Defence and 5. Welfare.

Everybody is supposed to have an opinion on these issues. The two major parties and their candidates for the Presidency, consequently, have taken definitive positions on them. What are the positions of the two parties on these subjects?

ON VIETNAM. Paradoxical as it may seem, the anti-war movement has, of late, died down in the US. There are no more big demonstrations or peace rallies in the cities or towns. The rage and fury of the student and the youth have been blunted by the simple expedient of staggering the draft, curtailing the combat role of the ground forces and even withdrawing the bulk of the army from the soil of Vietnam, while confining and intensifying American participation in the war to wholesale, unrestricted bombing.

In the moral wasteland of today's America, bombing of schools, hospitals, churches and the dyke-systems of Vietnam no longer evokes any shame, anger or protest. Nor do the majority of people think anything of killing and maiming men, women and children and making them refugees in their own land. After all, American casualties have come down to "tolerable" level—from more than 100 to a few deaths per week. The fact that the South Vietnamese death-rate has increased by at least 300 to 750 per week—not to mention "enemy" deaths or civilian casualties—is of little concern. Who cares for black or brown creatures?

Ever since he stepped up bombing in North Vietnam, Mr. Nixon hoped to bring Hanoi quickly to heel—well before the November elections. His calculations have misfired. Why, then, does he persist in destroying Vietnam completely? The answer is: The Vietnam war has become an obsession with Mr Nixon. In the words of Anthony Lewis, a New York Times commentator, "Richard Nixon remains determined to win the war, at whatever cost in Indochinese lives and American reputation"

The Republican Party fully supports its President in conducting the unending and inhuman war and in his refusal to come to a peaceful settlement with the North Vietnamese and the Provisional Revolutionary Government. And where is the mechanism to prevent a President in prosecuting an unpopular and immoral war? Under the US Constitution, only Congress can "raise and support armies" and only Congress can declare "war". No less a person than US Supreme Court Justice William Douglas is "inclined" to believe that the Vietnam war is unconstitutional. Where, then, is the conscience of the American Congress? Incidentally, in both the Houses of the Congress, the Democrats have the majority.

Where does the Democratic Party stand? Sure enough, the Democrats, since they are out of power, would like to upset Mr Nixon's applecart and bring about changes in American

policies. They would, above all, like to get back to the White House. But it should not be forgotten that it was the Democratic administration under John F. Kennedy which initiated the policy of intervention in Vietnam.

And it was his successor, Mr Lyndon Johnson - another Democrat—who extended and intensified the war by pouring in more than 5,50,000 men and vast quantities of war material into Vietnam. It was he who widened the war by massive bombardment of North Vietnam. Mr Johnson persisted fanatically but vainly with his ignoble aim of subjugating the Vietnamese people for four years. After these years of misadventure and dragging the American people into a quagmire of utter futility and desperation, he gave up. The people got fed up and dumped him.

Senator Edward Kennedy, Democratic Senator from Massachusetts, says now that "we are the party of hope, not despair". Senator McGovern, of course, is quite categorical on the Vietnam war. He will have nothing to do with it any more. He will pull out American troops, lock, stock and barrel. The Democratic Party pledges, as the first order of business, an immediate and complete withdrawal of all US forces in Indochina. In the light of the practices of the past Democratic administrations, is there any real guarantee that the new administration, if the Democrats are

returned to power, will keep their promise?

ON BUSING. Busing is a highly emotional issue in the US. Though this problem is directly and immediately connected with providing Negro children with better and wider educational facilities, it touches the very sensitive chord of American race-relationship. Since America is a racist and segregationist society, all cities and towns in the country are virtually divided along Negro-White lines. More than 17 years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools could no longer be tolerated. How to carry out that ruling continues to be a problem that haunts the land. Federal Courts now order residentially segregated southern cities to desegregate their schools by busing children out of their own neighbourhoods.

The Promethean struggle over how to achieve racial balance and harmony has been going on in America for long. Education and knowledge will ultimately break the racial barrier, it is generally believed. How, then, make education available to Negro children in a school of their choice?

The Democratic Party, in its campaign platform, promises better opportunities for education for the children of the poor and the deprived. It stands for racial desegregation in the schools. Transportation could be a tool towards achieving this goal. Sen. McGovern is considered to be an ardent supporter of racial equality and

naturally, is in favor of busing children—all children to schools. The Republican Party, being conservative and eclectic, is irrevocably opposed to the concept of busing of students for racial balance. Mr. Nixon being a good Republican, likewise abhors such a measure.

ON AMNESTY. The issue of Amnesty is born as a result of the Vietnam war. When increasing numbers of troops were being sent to Vietnam during both the Johnson and Nixon administrations, the Defence Department sent out thousands of draft-calls to thousands of students and young men in America. Disillusionment with the war came much sooner than what the military brass had expected. Mounting opposition to the draft-calls became fairly widespread in the college and university campuses.

Many young men went to prisons and were subsequently prosecuted and punished. But many others, in order to evade US laws, flatly refused to go to Vietnam on the basis of their being conscientious objectors to war. Still others left the country in disgust and migrated to Canada and other countries, at least temporarily. And even amongst the troops in the fields of Vietnam, some refused to obey orders of their commanders and surreptitiously crossed the battle-lines to NLF sanctuaries, and finally, to many European destinations. Following these developments, there is now a growing demand

from the families and friends of these hapless young men on the Administration to show compassion and justice.

The Democratic Party states its intention to declare an amnesty to those who for reasons of conscience refused to serve in the Vietnam war.

The Republican Party, on the other hand, rejects all proposals to grant amnesty to those who, according to the Administration, have broken US laws.

ON DEFENCE. The whole edifice of the military-industrial complex of the US is maintained and enhanced by the Defence budget. The budget is so huge that it staggers one's imagination. It is around 100 billion dollars which is more than the total value of India's GNP. A huge Defence force of 2.5 million armed men, the US maintains troops on foreign soil not only in Europe but in all the continents. America's air force is stationed in bases in four corners of the globe. Its navy prowls the seas in constant vigil.

The Democratic Party wants the Defence budget to be slashed drastically — at least to the tune of 32 million dollars within three years. Aid to foreign military dictatorships, it wants to be severely restricted or altogether eliminated.

The Republican Party, of course, does not want this curtailment now. It categorically rejects any cut in defence spending. It does not want to

blunt the "teeth" of America's defence.

ON WELFARE. In the US today, there are at least 30 to 40 million people who are considered poor or very poor. Poverty is a relative term, of course. Nonetheless there is this other America of poor people who are hungry, jobless, without any security of life or right to a decent living. They are not only Negroes, but also many white-families or Mexican-Americans and other minorities. It is almost inconceivable that so many Americans live invisibly in such utter misery and desolation in fabulously rich America

We are determined to make economic security a matter of right, proclaim the Democrats. Sen. McGovern asserts that everybody in America will be provided with a job with decent pay for those willing and able to work and an adequate income for those unable to work. He plans, he says, to raise 54 billion dollars through various measures of taxation for all round social welfare.

The Republicans flatly oppose programmes which embrace the principle of a Government guaranteed income. Mr Nixon rejects as unconscionable the idea that all citizens have the right to be supported by the Government.

These, in a nutshell, are the pivotal issues which are setting the tone to the Presidential election this year.

Salt Water for The Hungry Man

If soil conditions permit, even sea water can be used for irrigation.

by JOHN STEVENS

The author, is a lecturer in Geography at the University of Durham.

OIL money has financed a rapid increase in irrigated farming in West Asia and added considerably to pressures on the fresh water supply. Qasim, Saudi Arabia, for example, is extracting irrigation water from a depth of 2,000 metres. This is fossil water, up to 30,000 years old, and is being used far faster than it is replaced.

Salt water is readily available, but rarely used for fear that salt will build up in the soil and restrict plant growth. Often, this problem is accentuated by a rising water table. Good crops can be grown using saline water however, if the salt does not remain in contact with the roots for too long. At Eilat, Israel, Hugo and Elizabeth Boyko have successfully grown 180 species out of 200 tested in 22 years of experiments. Even using water with 10,000 parts per million of salt—13 times more saline

than normally used for irrigation—the mulberry grows well.

Eilat has virtually perfect conditions for saline irrigation sandy or gravelly soil to allow rapid percolation of the irrigation water, minimal amounts of sodium-absorbing clay, water with the proper sodium potassium balance, and a deep water table, so that saline water does not affect root development.

IN A COARSELY textured soil, the pore spaces between the mineral particles are large in comparison to the diameter of root hairs. Irrigation water percolates rapidly and the root hairs are cut off from oxygen only for a very short period of time before part of the pore space is once more occupied by air. At this stage, root hairs are in contact with both water and air, and the uptake of oxygen by the root hairs provides the energy required for the selective intake of nutrients from the irrigation water. As the irrigation water drains away, a saturated brine film covers the mineral particles and root hairs. Brine has a low viscosity however, so this film is soon interrupted and thus salt deposits within the soil are too restricted to form a barrier to aeration. Irrigation of sandy soil is carried out at frequent intervals and any salt deposits that form only remain for a short time before they are washed away from the roots.

Even after the irrigation water has percolated away, the soil atmosphere remains moist

and plants can obtain moisture through subterranean dew. There is considerable difference between the day and night temperatures and this gives rise to temporary condensation. This temperature difference within the soil is most marked within the top 8-10 cm and it is at this depth that subterranean dew forms. The dew is fresh water, not saline, and is deposited on the root hairs which have a very high absorptive capacity.

SALINITY can also restrict a plant's absorption of irrigation water, because osmosis depends on the liquid inside the plant root having a higher salt density than the water outside. But a proper ionic balance can counter the effects of higher salt density.

A decade ago Professor Hugo Heimann of the Technion Haifa, argued that sodium and potassium were antagonistic in animal physiology and by analogy, a similar relationship might exist in plant physiology, (*New Scientist* vol 9, p 410). High potassium levels in the soil would then counteract the adverse effects of high sodium levels. In practice where crops have been grown successfully using saline water, the potassium level of the soil has been high, up to 100 parts per million potassium present in the water and with a sodium potassium ratio similar to that of sea-water. A side effect of such salt water irrigation is that irrigated plants appear to have enhanced ability to withstand periods of drought.

Biological desalination also contributes to reducing the amount of salt present in the soil. Some plants, for example species of *Tamarix* (tamarisk), *Suaeda* (sea blite) and *Calotropis procera* (sodom apple), can accumulate salt in their aerial portions and harvesting thus removing salts from the soil.

THE CROPS themselves, must also be studied. Some varieties of barley, for instance, are more tolerant of saline environments than others, and these salt tolerant varieties may form the basis for breeding additional species specifically adapted to irrigation with salt water. Russian agronomists have been treating seeds with salt solutions prior to sowing and this acquired salt tolerance can possibly be passed on to succeeding seed generations. The greatest success will undoubtedly be generally regarded as already having some tolerance to saline conditions — tomatoes, cabbages, lettuce, barley, cotton, rice and alfalfa, for example — and there is no reason, given correct management, why yields should not be equally as high as with irrigation using non-saline water.

Later this year the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation is starting a research programme on saline water irrigation problems in West Asia and work will continue for at least six years.

Until now saline irrigation has been fairly restricted both in area and scope. Although it holds out some exciting

possibilities for the future, it will not turn vast stretches of the arid areas of West Asia into cultivated areas. Suitable soil conditions do not always coincide with suitable water, and greater care must be used with saline water.

But some of the brackish water discovered during the se-

arches for oil or potable supplies may well be used. The cost of using such sources, especially if the aquifers are near the surface, is not likely to be any more than irrigation schemes using non saline water. If brackish water can be used instead of good quality water to irrigate existing agricultural de-

velopment, then potable water could be released for urban supplies, reducing the need for expensive desalination schemes —By arrangement with 'New Scientist.'

CHRONICLE

October 5 — October 22

Thursday, October 5:

The 35th day of the bank strike. Sri Lanka will negotiate with the European Economic Community directly for duty-free entry of her products into the ECM and the benefits of preferential treatment accorded to associate members of the Community. All CIB employees other than those in executive grades will henceforth be entitled to full political rights. Dr. Senarath Paranavitarne (76), retired Commissioner of Archaeology, died in his home at Nugegoda yesterday. The final phase of the campaigns for the four by-elections saw many politicians in the field. The Ceylon Fisheries Corporation spent a sum of Rs 138,000 on effecting repairs to its trawler *Maple Leaf* and finally sold the vessel for Rs. 26,500. The working Committee of the Indian National Congress decided that the Government should take over the wholesale trade in rice and wheat. West Germany and China will conclude an agreement this week for mutual diplomatic recognition. Major fighting has broken out between the Yemen Arab Republic (North) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South).

Friday October 6:

The 36th day of the bank strike, and senior bank staff officers have made overtures, accor-

ding to the *Daily News*, to the PM to help settle the strike. According to the *Sun*, the Minister of Finance Dr. N. M. Perera, has reported to Government from abroad that the chances of assistance from the World Bank were brighter now than a short time ago. Dr. Perera was expected to return to Colombo tomorrow. The *Daily Mirror* reported that the Communist Party of Sri Lanka was in financial difficulties "it is nearly Rs. 150,000 in the red and CP hardliners who are in the saddle are confronted with the task of liquidating these claims". Thousands of Indian pro-Moscow Communists including some of its top leaders, were arrested in various towns in India whilst they were pursuing their demonstrations and campaign against rising prices and unemployment. Soviet CP chief Leonid Brezhnev is expected to pay a visit to the USA next April. President Idi Amin was adamant on his deadline date of November 8 for the total evacuation of Asians with British passports.

Saturday, October 7:

The 37th day of the bank strike with no prospect of a settlement in sight. Dr. N. M. Perera returned earlier than expected, yesterday evening and stated that he was hopeful that the World Bank and the IMF would view the problems of developing countries more sympathetically following the arguments he had adduced especially about SDRs in relation to the development programme of the country." The *Sun* reported that the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, will visit Sri Lanka early next year. A big shake up was under way in the national airline, the Air Ceylon Corporation, and the

General Manager, Mr. Rajah Cadiramen, is reported to have been placed on compulsory leave. The Vietnam Peace negotiations were in a "sensitive stage" according to US President Richard Nixon. Uganda and Tanzania signed a peace agreement yesterday in Mogadishu in Somalia.

Sunday, October 8:

The 38th day of the bank strike. In tomorrow's mini-general elections, 177,097 persons will be entitled to vote: all election meetings were concluded yesterday. A major fire broke out yesterday at the Chamber of Commerce Building where the City Office of the Bank of Ceylon is housed. The Special Crime Investigation Bureau has been called upon to investigate a fraud involving sugar worth s. 6 lakhs at the Food Commissioner's Department: an entire consignment of 2040 bags had been spirited away. A train crash killed over 100 people near the town of Saltillo in northern Mexico. The Victorian Government in Australia has agreed to pay a million dollar ransom in bartering for the lives of six schoolgirls and their young teacher abducted as they attended music class in their tiny country school.

Monday, October 9:

The 39th day of the bank strike. The election results were expected to be known around midnight today: both parties were reported to be confident of victory. Security forces had launched a major combing operation in Anuradhapura to comb out the insurgent bands in the area. Caste clashes continued in Jaffna with violence and handbombs erupting in several places. The price of beef is expected to shoot up over the next few years because the supply will not meet the demand. The Norwegian Government has tendered its resignation after the country decided in a referendum not to join the ECM. India yesterday accorded full diplomatic recognition to the GDR.

Tuesday, October 10:

The 40th day of the bank strike. The UNP won three seats, wresting Kesbewa and Puttalam from the SLFP and retaining Nuwara Eliya, and

the SLFP retained Ratnapura, at the mini general elections yesterday. Ceylon has sent a special envoy, Dr. J. B. Kelegama, to Europe to discuss Sri Lanka's trade with the EEC. Mr. C. P. de Silva, former Minister, died yesterday after a prolonged illness. In a mammoth welcome accorded to Mr S. J. V. Chelvanayakam on his return to Jaffna after resigning his seat in the National Assembly, he declared that under a unitary system of government the Tamils in this country could not live with freedom and self-respect: and that the only way out for the Tamil, was to set up a separate state of their own. Owing to continued caste clashes in the Karaiyoor area in Jaffna, the police has imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew. Kassippu gang warfare broke out in the Dehiwela area near Colombo yesterday. There was a major outburst of trouble in the state of Assam as language riots spread throughout the state and the army had been placed on full alert. Dr. Henry Kissinger was again in Paris holding secret talk with Hanoi's emissaries in a bid to effect a ceasefire in Vietnam.

Wednesday, October 11:

The 41st day of the bank strike. The Chief Prelate of the Malwatte Chapter had told the *Daily Mirror* that the draft Press Council Bill contained some obnoxious clauses. According to a report in the *Times of Ceylon*, the compulsory swabasha in the teaching of medicine at the University of Ceylon has been of no use and only led to triplication of work, lectures being conducted in Sinhala, Tamil and English: the attendance at swabasha lectures was minimal, and those who followed these lectures also followed the parallel lectures in English. There was an atmosphere of optimism in Paris when Kissinger's talks with the Hanoi envoys entered the third day. British sources indicated that it would be possible to keep the November 8 deadline of President Amin for the evacuation of Asians with British passports.

Thursday, October 12:

The 42nd day of the bank strike. The Government Parliamentary Party was expected to meet on October 19 to hold a post mortem on

the by elections. The Government Medical Officers Association (GMOA) has appealed to the Prime Minister to use her good office to end the bank strike. Press reports indicated that the Cabinet at its meeting yesterday endorsed the firm stand taken by the Government in dealing with the bank strike. The Government has decided to do away with the rule that public servants should stay within a 30-mile radius of their working place Chillies were once again distributed on the ration card at the rate of half an ounce per ration card — from stocks which had been imported from China; whilst the free market price of chillies in the city of Colombo was Rs 12 to Rs 15 a lb. Dr. Kissinger has extended his stay in Paris to continue his talks with the Hanoi envoys. The French legation in Hanoi has been completely destroyed by US bombers Washington has hastened to tender its apologies to Paris. An agreement was signed in Peking between West Germany and China establishing full diplomatic relations

Friday, October 13:

The 43rd day of the bank strike. Sri Lanka will have to pay around Rs 1,000 million this year as debt servicing on short term credit borrowed from various institutions the highest amount that the country has had to pay in any single year for short term credit. The Prime Minister issued a statement yesterday that in spite of the by-election results the mandate she had got in May 1970 remain unchanged. The next Budget will be presented on November 2. According to experts the substantial increase in food production over the past two decades have not been sufficient to close the gap between domestic production and domestic requirements because of the rapidly increasing population. Maithripala Senanayake's 25th anniversary celebrations as a parliamentarian begin today at Anuradhapura. President Amin has ordered the British High Commissioner in Uganda to quit with the last Asian to be evacuated. Libya imposed "Islamic" punishment for certain offences like theft and robbery including the cutting off of feet and hands. US bombs damaged the Indian chancery buildings in Ha-

noi. The US expressed regret for the damage done to the French, and Indian legations in Hanoi, but insisted that the bombing will go on.

Saturday, October 14:

The 44th day of the bank strike. Ceylonese employed abroad who have to remit money back home under the scheme introduced by Government last year will face difficulties in revalidating their passports if they do not keep their targets in remittances. The CWC demanded that plantation workers should be given land President Amin said that he was not breaking diplomatic ties with the UK, but the present High Commissioner was *persona non grata*. Presidential Adviser Dr. Henry Kissinger was back in the US to review his discussions in Paris with President Nixon.

Sunday October 15:

The 45th day of the bank strike. Nearly Rs. 1½ million in foreign exchange had been lost by Colombo Radio over the last 24 months. Air Ceylon's management has asked its flying crew to cut their hair short. A new draft Press Council Bill was gazetted yesterday evening: it was the same old bill with a few alterations. At the Maithripala Senanyake celebrations, the Prime Minister in her speech yesterday, appealed to the striking bank employees to return to work "for they should now realise that the Government could not be intimidated" she said that she had so far not spoken about the strike but she was now constrained to refer to it in view of the effect it had brought on the economy of the country. A big Soviet airliner, an Illyushin 62, crashed yesterday near Moscow killing all 176 on board. The USA and the USSR signed a shipping agreement yesterday. Egypt and other Arab countries have taken retaliatory action against West Germans in view of the restrictions placed on Arab nationals in West Germany after the Munich massacre.

Monday October 16:

The 46th day of the bank strike. The DWC backed the CWC demand for land for plantation workers. The *Daily Mirror* reported that the Kandy district branch of the LSSP wanted the LSSP to end its alliance with the SLFP and the UF government; that other branches

however wanted the alliance and the coalition to be continued. The Central Bank Employees Union has urged the Government to settle the strike forthwith. Christianity is not being taught to Catholic and other Christian children in a large number of schools which were taken over by the state in 1961. Ceylon's foreign exchange assets abroad had dropped. China and the Maldiv Islands have agreed to establish diplomatic relations immediately. Island planes yesterday bombed five alleged Arab commando bases in Lebanon and Syria in what seemed to be the beginning of a new Israeli policy to root out the guerillas.

Tuesday, October 17:

The 47th day of the bank strike. The Working Committee of the Civil Rights Movement which met yesterday, decided to challenge the revised Press Council Bill in the Constitutional Court. According to the sponsors of tomorrow's islandwide hunger strike about 500,000 workers belonging to six organisations will fast from dusk to dawn as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government and the reactionary laws such as the Public Security Act, the Criminal Justice Commissions Act and the Press Council Bill. Mr. Prins Gunasekera, one of the sponsors, addressed a public meeting in Jaffna last Saturday and appealed to the Tamil people to settle the language differences and join in the democratic protest against the repressive policy of the Government. All the daily papers carried protests and criticisms against the draft Press Bill. The Buddhist Encyclopaedia begun 17 years ago would be completed, at the rate it was going, by the year 2009 A.D. President Nixon, with only three weeks to go for the Presidential election, held a commanding 30 percent point lead over the democratic challenger George McGovern. A spokesman of the Ugandan military yesterday accused Tanzania of not honouring the peace agreement signed in Mogadishu ten days ago. Singapore in a mini budget has imposed new taxes on petrol, liquor and cars—to cut down consumption expenditure as well as increase revenue.

Wednesday, October 18:

The 48th day of the bank strike. According

to the *Daily News*, army units and insurgent-armed bands had clashed for over half-an hour in an exchange of fire in the jungles of Ritigala near Kekirawa yesterday. Air Ceylon had made a profit of Rs. 7.626 million for the current period in its tie-up with the UTA. Air Ceylon was making arrangements to buy the second DC 8 on the same terms. New emergency regulations have been gazetted further curbing bail in regard to certain categories of offences. The front and other pages of all daily papers were full of protests about the new draft Press Council Bill. The hunger strike organised for today went off peacefully without any incident or stir. With Egyptian Prime Minister Sidky's pending visit to Moscow, there were reports that the Soviet Union was ready to resume missile deliveries to Egypt. There was trouble in Chile with a strike by lorry owners and retail shop keepers: President Allende had warned the nation of the possibilities of a civil war. Dr Henry Kissinger had gone to Saigon to meet President Thieu.

Thursday, October 19:

The 49th day of the bank strike. A bill to impose a ceiling on incomes and to provide for the payment of compulsory savings contributions were gazetted by the Minister of Finance last night. The four new MPs who were elected at the recent by-elections will be sworn in today when the National State Assembly sits. The Ceylon Mercantile Union (CMU) one of the six sponsors of the one-day fast yesterday, claimed that a million people had participated in the protest hunger fast. Three army volunteers—a corporal and two privates and five employees of the Food Commissioner's Department have been taken into custody by the Police in connection with the six lakh sugar fraud. A Royal Assent by Queen Elizabeth proclaimed yesterday, officially sealed Britain's entry into the Common Market. Bangladesh has been admitted as an observer to the UN. Curfew had been imposed in Chile owing to the sabotage and violence in the course of the transport strike. Martial law had been imposed in South Korea by President Park Chung Hee. Egyptian Prime Minister Sidky, now in

Moscow, continued his talks with the Soviet leaders.

Friday, October 20:

The 50th day of the bank strike. The Bank Employees Union in a bulletin yesterday emphasised that there could be no return to work without the probationers and without a direct offer to solve the grievances of the strikers. The Government Parliamentary Party had a three-hour post mortem on the recent by-elections. Mr. J. R. Jayawardena had been persuaded to continue as the Leader of the Opposition - he had expressed a desire to step down. The Low Country Producers Association (LCPA) had yesterday asked the Government a 3-month extension to make the statutory declarations under the Land Act. Sweeping changes have been introduced by Government regarding closing time for shops: shops will in future be open for longer hours and for the whole day on Saturdays. Five co-operative stores had been burgled during the last 48 hours and a watcher of one of them had been fatally stabbed. President Allende of Chile bowed to the demands of the lorry owners who thereafter called off the strike. A communique issued in Moscow at the conclusion of Prime Minister Sidky's visit stated that top Kremlin leaders will visit Egypt shortly. President Amin has ordered the expulsion of all Asians - even those who had Kenyan, Tanzanian and Zambian passports - before the deadline date of November 8. Agreement has been reached on the line of control in Kashmir between Indian and Pakistani negotiators and the troop withdrawals envisaged in the Simla Agreement will be implemented in November.

Saturday, October 21:

The 51st day of the bank strike and the *Daily News* reported that the Government had decided to recruit additional hands to the strike-bound banks on an electoral basis. China has bought an additional 10,000 tons of sheet rubber from Sri Lanka for the current year. Approximately 11,000 persons who earn over Rs. 2000 a month will come within the income group liable to the levy under the income ceilings act and while another 29,000 who earn over Rs. 1000 a month will come under the

provisions of the Compulsory Savings Bill. Vidyodya University was closed down indefinitely yesterday following a clash between some students in the campus and a group of outsiders, including a member of the National State Assembly. The Land Reform Commission has announced that there will be no extension of the date to send in the declaration forms, viz. Monday October 23. The French newspaper *France-Soir* stated that the USA and North Vietnam had practically agreed on a cease-fire throughout Indo-China on November 1. Dr. Henry Kissinger was still in Saigon conducting talks with President Thieu. Queen Elizabeth of Britain arrived in Yugoslavia yesterday on a state visit - the first by British monarchy to a socialist state. President Nyerere of Tanzania cancelled a meeting with President Amin arranged by OAU circles.

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last issue, 20/10,) and also published on its front page a note by "Our Political Correspondent" under the heading **MASSSES HAVE STOOD BY GOVT.—ITS OWN WEAKNESSES LED TO BY ELECTION LOSSES.** The analysis opened thus: The most eloquent fact about the four by-elections that were held on October 9th is that 39% of the voters cast their ballots for the candidates of the United Front Government, as against 44% of voters who sided with the United National Party. If the voting in Kesbewa is interpreted to mean that there were two candidates who sought to present themselves to the electorate on the side of the Government — one legitimately and the other pretentiously—and the votes of Mr. Subash Chandrasiri are recorded as part of the United Front votes in that electorate that were split between him and the official candidate, Mr. Dixon Perera 53% of the voters at the four by-elections cast their ballots on the side of the Government and in any case, rejected the candidates of the United National Party.

The commentator took comfort in the fact that 39% of the voters had cast their votes for the UF, but not the fact that the UNP had received 44%; and that if the votes of the runner-up at Kesbewa, Subash Chandrasiri, were added to the SLFP candidates, the UF percentage would add to 53%. This is a curious kind of logic. Can it be said that

Subash's votes were anti-UNP votes?

Of one thing there cannot be the slightest doubt: Subash Chandrasiri's votes were anti-Government. He had carried on a more consistent political campaign against the Government on political lines than the UNP. Part of Subash's votes may have been "personal" (derived from the popularity of the father), but there is no guarantee that these votes would otherwise have gone to the SLFP candidate. By any yardstick, Subash's votes must be regarded an anti-government vote, and it would be anybody's guess how these voters would have voted if Subash had not been a candidate.

The one conclusion which can be drawn from the four elections is that only 39% of the voters rallied to the Government, and that 61% of the electorate was against the Government, including the large numbers who had failed to turn up to vote. After the May 1970 elections, the UNP had tried to find consolation in the percentage of voters who had voted for the UNP, and all UF political commentators had ridiculed these arguments of the UNP as being some kind of untenable political sophistry. To fall back upon the same kind of apologia which the UNP had clung to after May 1970 elections indicates that UF has been pushed to take defensive postures.

The *Political Correspondent* of the Nation then went on to

say: "The eloquence of this fact derives from the unmistakable background against which the by-elections took place, viz. the context of rising prices of consumer goods and palpable scarcities which have been the cause of considerable criticism of the Government and grumbling on the part of its opponents and supporters. This situation, when considered side by side with the undeniable high expectations generally manifested in the country after the May 1970 General Elections of increased welfare among the poorer sections of the people was bound to lead to the disaffection of some strata among those who supported the United Front until 1970. Most observers therefore, expected a considerable slide in the popularity of the Government to be demonstrated at the polls which took place this week. Many of them did not expect that the overwhelming mass of Government supporters of 2½ years ago would stand resolutely by the Government that they supported."

According to the writer, many circumstances had militated against the Government and many "observers" had expected a considerable loss of popularity by the Government. But, said the commentator, the people had "stood by the government" evidently because more had not gone over to the UNP and the anti-government groups. The simple fact is, whichever way one looks at it, there has been a considerable loss of popularity: a five percent who

would normally have gone to the polls kept away, and of those who went to vote only 39% had rallied to the Government. And what was even more significant was that the vast majority of the new voters were against the Government.

Nation's Political Correspondent then went on to examine the results of the four electorates separately, and concluded that the Government "had been let down by its own shortcomings" and not because the people had less "mass understanding of political realities." It would be useful to place on record the logic and argumentation of the *Political Correspondent* to enable our readers to appreciate the pseudo-marxist sophistry which was relied upon to make a case for the UF. "Of the four constituencies in which elections were held this week, the importance of two should not be overestimated. *Nuwara Eliya* is one of those few constituencies which possesses a majority of voters from the plantations, while *Puttalam* has the peculiarity of a Muslim majority with a considerable sprinkling of Catholic and Tamil minority voters. Voting trends in these two constituencies cannot, therefore, be regarded as typical of the general trend in the country. Indeed what the by elections have demonstrated is the relatively small variation in the voting patterns that has taken place in *Nuwara Eliya* and *Puttalam* even if one of them returned a

different party from that of May 1970.

"The other two constituencies, viz, *Ratnapura*, and *Kesbewa*, are more important for interpreting current trends in the country. Both of them point to the same phenomenon, viz. a considerable slide down of the Government vote. In the case of *Ratnapura*, the reduction of the Government majority by almost 50% has to be regarded as important. Various explanations have been offered and, perhaps some of them are even valid. But nothing can explain away the fall in the Government's majority of more than 5,000 votes. In the case of *Kesbewa*, what has been a Left-wing electorate from the year 1947 was lost to the Right-wing. But this is not as significant as it sounds. What is more significant is that the United Front found itself confronted with a split in its ranks which it lacked the internal discipline and external command over the electorate to overcome. It may even be said that it lacked the wisdom of choice and the understanding of local reality that could have enabled it to manipulate the split to its advantage. For, had it made the correct choice of candidates, *Kesbewa* would have been won for the United Front despite the split in its ranks.

Taken as a whole, the by-elections show that the Government has been let down by its own shortcomings, rather than by any lapse in popular

consciousness or mass understanding of political realities. Despite the burdens that the masses must face in any period of transition from one social order to another, the people have not turned away from the path that they had chosen at the General Elections of May 1970. The voting figures demonstrate that they have stood firmly by the United Front. But it is the United Front it seems, that has failed the people. It has, on the one hand, allowed confusion to be spread among marginal voters by its own propaganda failures and the hostility of the capitalist newspapers. On the other hand it has allowed its own discipline and sense of internal unity to weaken and a split to develop within its organisations. *If the by-elections demand any correction of behaviour, this must come overwhelmingly from within the United Front and its Government.*"

THE SAME ISSUE of the *Nation* also endeavoured to offer an explanation why the UF had fared so badly at *Kesbewa*. It published a "letter" from a writer under the pseudonym *Anti-UNP* and published it under the heading THE LESSON OF KESBEWA. "Will those at the helm learn the lesson of *Kesbewa*. That is the important question at the moment. 40 out of 47 SLFP Branches are supposed to have opted for Mr Dixon Perera. And yet Mr. Subash Chandrasiri, campaigning alone against the full might of the Government, whacked him by a

majority of over 5,000 votes. What kind of judgement is this? It is obvious that considerations other than those of the electorate had influenced the decision to pick Mr. Dixon Perera. This type of bungling has been the greatest obstacle in the path of the SLFP. Not only in the case of choosing candidates for election but also in the choice of people to man key posts in the Government. The electorates have never been consulted. Soon after this Government was formed, this subject came up at the Amparai sessions of the SLFP. It is this type of political wire-pulling that led to the coining of the word, 28 SRI. Let's hope the lesson of Kesbewa will be carefully studied, chewed, swallowed and digested and such foolish mistakes avoided in the future."

The candidate was not the right one. This is usually the kind of apology offered by a political party which has to fall back upon such excuses. If the UF makes such a disastrous mistake about the choice of candidates after two and a half years in power, then something rotten has crept into its political mechanics. And what is even more significant is that the revolt from within its own ranks has assumed tremendous proportions. The UNP has a miserable image in the country, and if those who voted for Subash came from within the UF the prospects for the Government are worse than the figures reveal.

The *Nation* of October 13 rounded off its attempt to explain the by-election results by seeking to ridicule the UNP leader, Dudley Senanayake, for the statement he issued immediately after the elections. The Prime Minister herself in her statement had endeavoured to show that Mr. Dudley Senanayake was talking through his proverbial hat in the most hypocritical tongue-in-the-cheek manner. The *Nation* went one step further and sought to reduce the whole statement to a personal matter. In a piece **OH TO BE PREMIER ONCE AGAIN** in the *Notes and Comments* column, the *Nation* dissected what he had said in his statement, argument by argument, and asserted that Mr. Senanayake was guilty of nonsensical gibberish.

And then it went on to examine "the dominant consideration behind Mr. Dudley Senanayake's attitude." The *Nation* had no difficulty in finding the answer. "The UNP leader," it said, "gives two damns for the fate of the country or the future of its people. He is only concerned with securing another opportunity to become Prime Minister. With this as a basic premise (are there no UF politicians who want to be Prime Minister?), the comment went on, "This would imply that Mr. Senanayake was hardly concerned with the policies of Government, whether of the present Government or of his own. Yet he declares that the by elections are a clear verdict that the policies of the

United Front Government are unacceptable to the people. Which policies? The establishment of the Republic? The abolition of the Senate? The Ceiling on Incomes? The Ceiling on the ownership of Land? The State Trading Corporation? The Gem Corporation? Which of these are unacceptable to the people? Who canvassed them? Not Mr. Senanayake or the UNP surely! They merely made demagogic capital of the rising cost of consumer goods and their short supply in the market. Besides, if these policies are unacceptable what alternative policies do the people want? What alternative policies have the UNP to offer them? Or do they wish to persevere with the same bankrupt policies of the past that have brought the country and the people to the very brink of economic disaster?"

The rest of the comment is the usual barrage against the UNP, that it was a bankrupt played out party. It is no doubt true that the UNP had made unforgivable mistakes in the past, that it represented vested interests and that its image among the voters was deplorably poor. But yet, after 2½ years of anti-UNP campaigns by the UF whilst being in the seats of power and with the state radio at its command, forty-four percent of the voters who went to the polls cast their votes for the UNP.

However it is only fair by readers, in Ceylon and abroad, to let them read the kind of

political anti-UNP polemic on the UF continues to rely upon: "The fact is that not only have the people not rejected these policies—if by some stretch of imagination the voting figures can be said to point in this direction—but there are no alternative policies that the UNP or any other political party or body of economic strategists can conceivably offer to the people. The Bankrupt policies of the UNP under Mr. Dudley Senanayake's leadership and earlier, under the leadership of his father have been the biggest agency of the tragic plight to which the economy of Sri Lanka has been reduced. The policies of the United Front have, perhaps, been hesitant and incomplete, but they have pointed the only direction in which the country's acute problems can be solved. The neglect of the past, thanks most of all to Dudley and his father, has made it inevitable that the cost of working out these solutions should weigh heavily on all the people. Some of them cannot understand this and, not surprisingly, protest at the severity of present difficulties. This results in the losing of some votes at elections and by-elections. But it is Mr. Dudley Senanayake's contention that, because the medicine is bitter, the Government should not administer "Nothing exposes Mr. Dudley Senanayake more as a contemptible opportunist than his current demagoguery. The Government's policies are unacceptable! The measure of free rice is his most

valuable gift to the people! What halcyon days the people enjoyed in the past under Senanayake Governments! Even if this is true about the past (which is highly questionable), does the severity of our country's economic crisis permit continuation of the habit of lotus-eating and living on loans borrowed at high rates of interest? The UNP leader does not even pose the question. He limits his politics to exploiting consumer dissatisfactions and the need to advance the date of the next General Election. As to what alternative policies he will advocate in the event of success at such an election, he does not even pause to consider. All that the man wants is to be Prime Minister once more!"

BUT THE MOST interesting analysis of the election results came in the *Nation* of October 20 by a commentator who signed as *Sagittarius* and the piece was entitled LESSONS OF THE BY-ELECTIONS. Although the piece was chiefly concerned with defending the *Nation* line that the "masses had stood by the Government", the commentator *Sagittarius* drew attention to a number of important facts of consequence and significance.

Sagittarius first analysed the figures and compared them to the voting percentages of the 1970 elections in the four electorates. "The main propaganda blasts have been fired on both sides and we can now more soberly take stock of the

results of the 'by-elections.' The first thing is to lay out a clear picture of the actual shifts in voting patterns. In the table below the percentage polled by various candidates is given as a percentage of votes cast; the percentage polled in each electorate is also given.

	1970	1972
Kesbawa		
UF %	54.6	24.9
UNP %	35.4	39.6
Others %	—	35.0*
% Polled	80.5	81.1

* Almost entirely Mr. Subash Chandrasiri's vote.

Ratnapura		
UF %	64.4	56.0
UNP %	34.5	42.0
Others %	1.0	1.8
% Polled	83.2	83.7

N'Ellya		
UF %	44.1	45.0
UNP %	54.5	53.4
Others %	0.9	1.1
% Polled	83.4	85.5

Puttalam		
UF %	45.0	43.2
UNP %	45.0	49.0
Others %	9.7	7.2
% Polled	81.4	82.5

His first comment was on the percentage who had gone to the polls and indulged in some platitudes about the "involvement" of the masses in politics and reminded the UF Government that it had to get closer to the masses. This is excellent Marxist advice and is how *Sagittarius* put it: "In our view the first and most significant result of the elections is the increase in the % age polled especially the remarkable

increase of over 2% at *N'Eliya*. Generally the poll tends to drop during by-elections. What is more, according to some political theorists, the masses at the moment are said to be in a state of apathy and political indifference. Even if the fact that most new voters are in the young age group is part of the explanation for this phenomenon, one thing is absolutely clear: the masses are far from uninvolved in politics, they are very concerned very involved and, if one might project a little, very determined to become more involved. Perhaps this is an appropriate point at which to remind the UF Government of its promise to take the people closer to the process of government."

First, he went on to analyse the voting results in Ratnapura and Puttalam thus: "Excepting *N'Eliya*, to which we shall turn a moment, *Puttalam* and *Kesbewa* show a 4% rise in the UNP poll and *Ratnapura* a 75% rise. Since the split at *Kesbewa* would have aggravated the apparent swing, we might very broadly conclude that an overall swing of about 5% towards the UNP is visible. Now, as the Prime Minister has said, this is no matter for complacency. However, if we take note of the rise in the cost of living and what last week's Political Correspondent of the *Nation* aptly calls "it is not the people who have failed the United Front, but the United Front that has failed the people", it is truly remarkable that the swing wasn't bigger

We must remember that the 1970 vote was an immense landslide to the UF, in which the wavering and uncommitted sections and those whose notions of Socialism were garnished with a liberal dose of petit-bourgeois aspirations would have all been carried. These layers of our electorate would have been the first to drift back towards the UNP as living got tough with the deepening economic crisis; one would have expected a much larger petit-bourgeois-motivated marginal vote in Ceylon than the 5% figure suggests."

Sagittarius admits that there was a swing of about 5% to the UNP, but he hastens to say why this 5% does not mean much—in the current context of rising prices and the like.

Then, he goes on to analyse the results of *Nuwara Eliya* in the following terms. "At *N'Eliya* the UF has actually improved its position by a small amount. Given the overall swing to the UNP which we have discussed in the previous paragraph, the irresistible conclusion is, that a considerable swing in the votes of plantation workers, large enough to superpose itself on and obscure the general pro-UNP swing, must have occurred away from the UNP and towards the UF. Thondaman, as is well remembered, joined hands and campaigned all out with the UNP last time and this was reflected in the pattern of voting in the upcountry areas in 1970. This time, un-

able to keep his grip on his following and losing interest because there is little prospect of being bribed with high office or state favours, he was compelled to allow what he called a 'conscience vote'. Well it looks like the workers, unlike their *mudalali* boss, actually do have a conscience! It is now up to the UF parties to go all out, and forge an alliance with the plantation worker, too many opportunities have already been missed."

Here he goes on to rightfully note that the UF had actually improved its position forgetting that the Government had offered a "bribe" in the form of increased wages for the plantation workers. He makes no reference to this very important and significant factor and concludes this part with another bit of Marxist advice that the Government should "forge" an alliance with the plantation workers. *Those who know the history of the Marxist Parties and their changing attitudes to the plantation workers during the last 30 years will realise the supreme callousness inherent in this piece of advice.*

Then, he takes on *Kesbewa*, and indulges in over-simplification in talking about the "progressive vote." This is what he says. "At *Kesbewa* 60% of the progressive vote went to Subash Chandrasiri despite the fact that he had no official backing but 85% of the Official SLFP Branches preferred the other candidate. It is

being said that in all parts of the country the most dedicated and politically committed cadres of the UF parties are being elbowed out and mudalalis, opportunists and 28 SRI types are nosing their way into favour. In some areas similar charges are being made about the people who hang around and influence UF Members of Parliament. It might be a good thing to initiate a Mini-Cultural Revolution inside each UF party against creeping bourgeoisiefication."

Sagittarius wants a mini-Maoist Cultural Revolution in the UF to boot out the black-marketeters and opportunists who had crept into its ranks. He says a great deal but he does not amplify on the implications of what he says. Kesbewa was a protest against the UF from within and so far as the votes given to Subash was concerned, but it was a significant protest also from the outside against the UF. It is easy to dismiss Kesbewa by saying that a mini-cultural revolution was necessary in a country where a cultural revolution of the kind which shook China is not a practical proposition immediately, but the total implications of Kesbewa in a parliamentary system of government are many and far-reaching.

Finally *Sagittarius* summed up the analysis in what pun-dits would be tempted to describe as a 'marxist class analysis', but the four points he makes are such broad oversimplifications that one cannot

rely completely on their correctness. This is how he concluded: "The broader conclusions that a detailed analysis of the election results leads one to, are:— (i) The masses have refused to budge to the Right and stand by their Socialist programme as envisaged in May 1970. (ii) The plantation workers have begun to break with the previous misguided and reactionary alliance with the UNP. (iii) Irrespective of Mr Subash Chandrasiri's personal politics and for a number of reasons that cannot be discussed here we interpret Kesbewa as evidence of the emergence of a Left protest vote impatient with the Government's slow progress and its political dilly-dallying. (iv) A part of the peripheral petit bourgeois and less politicalised votes have under pressure of rising prices etc., shifted back to the UNP.

We have fully set out the case made out by the *Nation* for the UF as completely as we could. Some of our own comments on the by elections will not be accepted by those who subscribe to everything the *Nation* says as gospel, but there is no doubt that the last has not yet been said about the by-elections.

The Prime Minister in her statement endeavoured to show that the UNP leader was wrong when claimed that the by-election results constituted "an uncompromisingly clear verdict" of growing unpopularity of the UF government.

What the Prime Minister emphasised was that the by-elections had not changed the mandate she received in May 1970. Nobody will quarrel with this statement. She also stated that she would take note of the swingback of votes from the UF to the UNP, and without any "complacency" take remedial measures. She did not amplify on the matters which she felt needed attention, but she made references to the cost of living and other matters with high priority in the wide range of matters of public discontent.

But the greater part of the statement was devoted to twitting Mr. Dudley Senanayake for declaring that the results of the 1972 by-elections were an 'uncompromisingly clear verdict' of the UF'S unpopularity. She referred to a number of by-election results in the period 1966-70 and stated that the UF had won the by-elections or reduced UNP majorities. Mr. Senanayake had not conceded that they constituted an 'uncompromisingly clear verdict' on the UNP.

No Prime Minister can be expected to make such admissions. Every politician in the face of defeat makes excuses to "save face" hoping that some miracle would restore the *status quo ante*. The results of the by-elections between 1966 and 1970 were a clear forecast of what the May 1970 elections would turn out to be. The by-election results of that period were undoubtedly clear writing on the wall—and all the

apologia and "explanations" offered by UNP leaders and newspapers pleading the UNP cause could not change the course of history, or to use a Bandaranaikeism, turn rivers around or make the waters flow backwards.

The by-election results of October 1972 are equally clear writing on the wall as were the 1966-70 by-election results. UF leaders are today doing exactly what UNP leaders did between, 1966-70 trying to explain away the setback indulging in polemics against the rival party.

It is not too late for the UF to make amends to recapture some of the euphoria which has been lost. Will the UF be able to do it?

IT
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ADVERTISE
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Science Looks at the Mango

by
VINAYAKUMAR

ACCORDING to experts the first mango grew in the forest of the Indo-Burmese border and from there it spread all over India. Some 1,300 years ago the Chinese tasted their first mango from India when the Buddhist scholar Huientsang took it home. During the early decades of Buddhism Malaysia got it from Indian Buddhist monks. But it was only in the 15th century that the Portuguese took mango seeds from India to South America and Africa. Our neighbour, Pakistan, of course shares with us the honour of being the homeland of this king of fruits.

The Government of India is well aware that unless efforts are made to improve quality India might lose its pre eminent position. In America the mango has been extensively planted in Florida where two years ago an Indian expert noted that more than 400,000 mango trees had been planted. In their effort to make a success of the industry many American growers are not even averse to exotic measures like non-stop music in the mango orchards—as this is supposed to increase production.

In 1969 an international symposium of mango and mango

culture, the very first of its kind organised in the world, was held at New Delhi under the auspices of the International Society for Horticultural Science and the Indian Agricultural Research Institute. One of the points discussed was better utilisation of the mango skin and the conversion of the nut into food products.

At the six-acre experimental mango orchard of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute experiments are going on "in national integration" of mangoes from different parts of India. Recently horticulturists inter-bred famous southern varieties like neelam, bangalooru and suvarnakha with North Indian varieties like dusheru and langra. The purpose was to evolve the best variety. To quote on spokesman "In the hybrid between neelam and dusschri the qualities of neelam like precocity, regular annual bearing lasting qualities during transportation and profuse bearing will be imparted to the crossed product while retaining the flavour of dusschri".

The IARI has evolved in the past ten years as much as 450 new strains of hybrids. Of these 50 varieties have borne fruit although only 30 of these new strains were found worthwhile. In evolving new varieties the institute has developed a new procedure known as "detached methods" in which the stem from a mango tree is detached and grafted on a mango sapling. To ensure that all new shoots will be of the new

variety, the sapling above the graft is cut. By this method it is hoped that the best variety can be easily multiplied for distribution. The world's biggest ever mango show was organised at Patua, a few years ago when the Indian Council of Agricultural Research had 600 out of the 1,000 Indian varieties brought under one exhibition. The entries were divided into three classes, commercial varieties, the new superior hybrid varieties (developed by growers) and the specialised varieties for making squashes, chatni and pickles.

THE SYMPOSIUM made a series of recommendations for improving the keeping quality, standardisation of processing methods and avoiding the extra softness of ripe mangoes to step up exports. Studies are being made to increase the storage life of mango by radiation and growth regulations, based on a physiological and horticultural approach.

It is not so well known that nearly 18 million maunds or ten per cent of our total mango production goes to waste. If this spoilage during ripening can be reduced to less than five per cent the country can save 26 lakhs of rupees per season.

The most important period for the mango crop is the flowering period and in different parts of India horticulturists have to face different problems. In Punjab the mango crop is usually the victim of the mango-hopper. Although

considerable research has been done on this insect so far no remedy has been discovered. Another illness is the "bunchy top" disease also known as malformation of mango inflorescence. Even here no remedy is yet in sight.

Israel which is today producing considerable amounts of fruit, has developed preservation methods to suit the mango to coat it with a thin layer of plastic emulsion which eliminates the need for refrigeration, prevents spoilages and conserves the water content without cutting off the necessary supply of oxygen. The skin of the fruit does not crack under the plastic coating and bacteria cannot enter. This process keeps the fruit for four to six months after harvest. The IARI has also devised a method of wax coating mangoes to preserve them. This wax is obtained as a byproduct during sugarcane processing and the cost of mango protection can be as low as 20 paise per 100 mangoes.

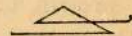
Another method evolved by scientists for much more delicate fruits like strawberries can be used for mangoes. In this system known as oxytrol the oxygen in the transport containers is completely replaced by nitrogen. Thus putting the ripe fruits as it were to sleep till the containers are reopened. In Soviet Russia scientists have made a new type of wax paper integrated with sorbic acid, which suppresses the growth of fungi and mould.

The Government of India feels that the level of mango export has to be stepped up to 75,000 tonnes per annum, leading to an additional foreign exchange earning of Rs 1.4 crores annually, as compared to the present export of 12,000 tonnes.

Cutting costs is a very vital matter in such a delicate industry like the mango where each fruit has to be individually picked. In New York many fruit research centres are experimenting with a chemical compound 2-chloro-ethine-phonic acid, which, spread one or two weeks before harvest makes fruits separate easily from the stem.

The US is very strict in importing Indian mangoes for fear of infecting the American crop. Recently the University of Allahabad made significant progress in controlling the gall midge, a major pest of the mango industry.

One peculiarity faced by the mango industry is the "alternate failure of the crop" which is a physiological disorder. For two or three years the crop thrives, followed by successive years of under-production. Scientists feel that better hybrid, regular manuring and thinning of plantings are helpful in reducing the trouble.



World Going Vegetarian ?

THE green revolution concentrating on vegetable proteins is gradually improving the nutritive status of children in Asia and Africa and other areas that used to be regarded as less well-fed than the United States and Western Europe. But the whole world is gradually going vegetarian, suggested many scientists attending the 9th International Congress of Nutrition which met in Mexico City recently.

The vegetarians in affluent nations who eat no meat, fish or fowl for moral or philosophical reasons today may be joined in a few years by millions of people who will choose vegetable sources for proteins because of a shortage of animal protein. Soy drinks, soy milk a soy breakfast cereal for infants which is mixed with water to serve, corn proteins, peanut butter and other vegetable proteins dominated the exhibits at the Congress.

In a meeting on vegetable sources of protein Dr. R. A. Reiners described a process in which corn gluten is made more palatable by removing fat

components. He said corn protien processed in this way might be used as an emulsifying agent or extender in meat products or ingredient in high protein breads. Corn protiens contain an imbalance of amino acids and thus must be used with other proteins. But they will be valuable in combination with other vegetable proteins, said Dr. Reiners.

Dr. M E Sambucetti of the University of Buenos Aires reported on rat feeding tests to determine any toxicological effects of linseed protein. The tests showed no pathological damage, except mild fat infiltration of the liver. The linseed protein is highly digestible, said Dr. Sambucetti. Dr. Charles McPherson of Texas Tech University described a candy-like food stick formulated as a balanced snack food with cottonseed and soy proteins supplying the protein components. Dr. McPherson said the stick demonstrates how cottonseed protein mixed with soy products can be used to fulfill protein needs of the future.

Other protein sources reported on included tamarugo, a

tree which grows in Northern Chile. The leaves and dried fruit have been used in animal feeding. In experiments in Mexico, protein derived from alfalfa grass proved as good as the quality of protein from soy beans. Cashewnut is being used as a source of protein in another experiment in Mexico. Soy, cottonseed, linseed or alfalfa grass isn't steak, but numerous scientists think it may take the place of steak in 15 or 20 years, even for the world's great steak eaters - North Americans, Europeans and some South Americans.

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