

Vol. 21 No. 39 — March 12, 1977 — **RUPEE ONE**

TRIBUNE



NEW
REVIEWS

Vol. 21 Nov 30 - March 12 1977 - PRICE ONE

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PEOPLE'S PUBLISHING HOUSE,

124, Kumaran Ratnam Road,

Colombo 2.

Phone: 36111

Letter From The Editor

THERE IS A GROWING REALISATION that the Republican Constitution of 1972 is not adequate enough to cope with socio-political tensions and compulsions of the multinational, multi-religious and multilingual composition of the population of Sri Lanka. The Secretary to the Ministry of Justice, Mr. Nihal Jayawickreme, had set the ball rolling by a thought provoking article in the *Sunday Observer* of January 9 emphasising that the Constitution must be refashioned. In last week's issue of *Tribune*, we published articles which pointed out that it was not enough to refashion the Constitution but that it had to be redone completely. Readers will recall that, in 1972, *Tribune* had pointed out in no uncertain terms that the Constitution which had been drawn up with fanfare and self-congratulatory complacency would not stand the test of time: that it would start tumbling down even before the ink was dry in the Statute Book in which it was inscribed. Loud mouthed apologists and propagandists had proclaimed that the Constitution was good enough for a thousand years—like the thousand years Reich of Hitler—but *Tribune* had insisted that the Constitution could not possibly survive even a thousand days. Already a major constitutional enactment has been adopted in regard to a vital matter like the number of members in the Assembly and the basis of representation. Our Republican Constitution has been crying aloud for change in so many matters that it would be best to re-do a new one incorporating only some of the features of the present Constitution without trying to tinker with the present one with amendments. The 1972 Constitution, as we have pointed out often, has helped to divide the country much more completely than any other Constitution since 1930. The kind of united Sri Lanka that might have been possible in 1930, or 1946, or even in 1970, is only a dream of the past and new decisions have to be made on the basis of present realities. We shall revert to this matter often in the coming months. It is also significant that some of the basic provisions in the Constitution have been challenged in the Courts. One matter that has drawn great attention is the power vested in the President in regard to invoking the Public Security Ordinance. In this connection we have recently read with interest a Note headed "The Public Security Ordinance and the Constitution—A Point of View". The point made in the Note is that the powers given to the President by the Public Security Ordinance have not been taken away by the Constitution: that the Constitution only affects his powers by imposing upon him the duty to declare an emergency when advised to do so by the Prime Minister, and to do all such acts connected with an Emergency on being so advised. It is thought improbable that the Constituent Assembly, security conscious as it was because of the insurgency of 1971, could have left the country completely without any machinery for ensuring public security in situations where there would be no Prime Minister to advise the President. Three instances are mentioned. Firstly, the period between the completion of a general election, when the Prime Minister will be functus, and the election of a new Prime Minister—a period that may be considerable if the parties contending for power are more or less evenly balanced. Secondly, a situation, actually contemplated by the Constitution in Section 98 (3) when a President may have to take over fully the functions of Executive Government. Thirdly, a situation, which must have been very much in the minds of the Members of the Constituent Assembly, where in an Emergency such as the Emergency of 1971 the capture of the Prime Minister or any other such circumstances makes advise of the Prime Minister being conveyed to the President impossible or improbable. Such is a brief summary of the Note which is an impressive document with arguments that are difficult to disregard lightly. Whilst it is no doubt true that every Constitution is pregnant with constitutional loopholes and controversial clauses (which could be differently interpreted), the 1972 Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka is a deadweight which cannot take the country forward because of the fundamental contradictions inherent in it that stems from a crude attempt to make a theistic (Buddhist mainly) system fit a secular near-socialist apparatus, and from the dishonest attempt to make a discriminatory anti-minorities Constitution appear to be a progressive one paving the way towards socialism. It is significant that the demand for a separate state for the Tamils only took firm root only under the present Constitution. Suntharalingam had shouted, for many years in the past, for a separate Eelam, without making any impact on the Tamil masses and the Tamil youth. But the story is different today. The Constitution of 1972, fashioned by Marxists, Socialists and the like to inveigle Centrists and Conservatives to slip into socialism through disguised racial, religious and language chauvinism, has brought this country to the brink of separation. Is there any way this catastrophe can be avoided?

TRIBUNE

Founded in 1954

A Journal of Ceylon and
World Affairs

Editor S. P. Amarasingam

Every Saturday

March 12, 1977

Vol. 21 No. 39

TRIBUNE

43, DAWSON STREET,

COLOMBO-2.

Telephone: 23172

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Postponing The Elections?

March 9,

Though Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his PPP had been expected to win the general elections in Pakistan it was thought that the "united" (for the elections) nine-party opposition PNA (Pakistan National Alliance) would stretch him to the fullest. Reports indicate that the PNA had drawn tremendous crowds at its meetings, processions and rallies and this was thought to be a good indication of the electoral support for the PNA. Bhutto's PPP had drawn even greater crowds. But, judging from the size of the crowds, observers had inferred that the Opposition PNA would come very close to the PPP—and some had even given the PNA a runaway chance of scoring a victory.

Pakistan's elections have shown that, in the Subcontinent, at least crowds are no indication of electoral strength or voting power. Bhutto's PPP won a more than two-thirds majority and left the PNA a bad loser in spite of all the fuss and hullabaloo about the "united Opposition". It was a landslide victory that even Bhutto's most optimistic supporters had not expected. The victory was so impressive and so convincing that the Opposition cries about a "rigged election" will not cut much ice. (Knowledgeable observers know that a election such as the one which has taken place in Pakistan—for the first time on universal adult franchise—cannot be "rigged" to the extent as to create a landslide: rigging may be feasible within small limits when the divisions are sharp and the forces balanced, but rigging on a massive scale to create a landslide victory is difficult to envisage especially when opposition parties had been given civil liberties to conduct the election campaigns freely. For an administration to rig an election is not easy with a noisy and vociferous Opposition—though the press has been put under rigid controls. It is yet to be seen whether the Opposition PNA leaders can bring reliable evidence that the elections were rigged, but it seems doubtful if they can—minor rigging in a few places cannot upset a landslide

victory such as the one scored by Mr. Bhutto.

The Pakistan election results is a personal triumph for Mr. Bhutto of the highest magnitude. He had become a popular mass leader even during the military regime of Ayub Khan (and his "guided democracy") but has now sought to bring Pakistan within the community of the great democracies with universal adult franchise. Although there are many restrictions on full democracy in the present constitution of Pakistan—which stem, no doubt, from its political history from the time of its creation—there is not the slightest doubt that a great advance has been recorded.

Pakistan is a theocratic Islamic state, but it is significant that all the ultra-religious groups and parties which had "united" with the Opposition "progressive parties" could not turn the religious-minded Muslims against Mr. Bhutto's PPP and its neo-secularism. Pakistan is an interesting phenomenon in the way democratic traditions are growing in South Asia. In the past, before the European conquests, rulers in the region had been changed in wars and through dynastic manoeuvring and intrigues—and in the last resort, as of now, military and police power had decided the outcome. Today, the democratic alternative of the ballot has begun to gain currency in many parts of the world and to Mr. Bhutto's credit it must be said that he has done a great deal to transform Pakistan from being an autocratic military regime into a near democratic state. Pakistan has far to go, but what has taken place is impressive—because the process of election is the beginning.

Pakistan's elections reminds us forcefully of the 1970 elections in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Dudley Senanayake and the UNP had drawn the biggest and the most impressive crowds during the election campaign, which had been held under circumstances, which Dudley Senanayake had thought would be most favourable to him. The opposition coalition, the United Front, had also drawn big crowds. Most observers had expected the UNP to win by a narrow lead, but UF enthusiasts had been equally certain that the SLFP-LSSP-CP combine would win with a small majority. Nobody had expected the landslide the UF had scored with a huge more-than-two-thirds

majority. A slight swing in the non-committed vote, coupled with a major tilt in the youth vote, had brought the UF to supreme political power (though in the matter of the popular vote the UNP had an impressive just-under-fifty percent). The 1970 Ceylon election (it was still Ceylon then) was a lesson to political observers that it was foolish to base election predictions on the size of crowds at election meetings and rallies. The elections in Pakistan have borne this out. And it is yet to be seen whether the crowds being drawn by the "united" Opposition to Indira Gandhi is a true indication of the likely results.

Pakistan has today nearly completed its elections and India will also complete hers before the beginning of the third week of March. But it is not yet certain when the elections in Sri Lanka will take place. Though the Prime Minister has stated that the elections will take place six months hence—somewhere in the first half of August—there are political pundits who assert that the elections may yet be postponed through a constitutional amendment. There is no doubt—whatever the UNP may say or threaten—that the Constitution permits a postponement of the election with a two-thirds majority. LSSP pundits also seek to interpret the Constitution in a way to suit their present policy imperatives: that the Assembly stands dissolved on May 22 and that a two-thirds majority could not alter the situation.

If one considered the matter without being carried away by the cold war, which has been generated about the postponement question, every impartial and objective constitutional expert will accept that with a two-thirds majority the elections can be legally postponed. Whether this can be ever-recurring possibility is a question that has not been provided in the Constitution—it is one of its many anomalies, deficiencies, inadequacies, and loopholes. (Even the LSSP which was chiefly responsible for dra-

wing up the Constitution now speaks of its "inadequacies" to solve the national minorities question—and SLFPers now say that the ultra hardline position in regard to any concessions to the national minorities had come from the LSSP (whether this is true or otherwise only Time and further "revelations" can establish). But whatever it is, if the SLFP can even now muster a two-thirds majority, the elections can be postponed for further period.

There is only one way for the SLFP to get a two-thirds majority today, and that is with the support of the TULF. With the continuing discussions between the SLFP and TULF, with evident signs of cordiality, many knowledgeable observers believe that the SLFP hierarchy has still not given up ideas of securing a two-thirds majority to effect a postponement. Though the TULF has stated its hardline position of a separate state as its ultimate objective, (and its Youth Front has made hardline statements about postponement and a separate state), it is believed that the TULF leadership may take a pragmatic view of the matter if the SLFP will concede two matters: one to inscribe language rights in the Constitution, and the other to recognise the principle of self-determination while agreeing to establish district councils to grant regional autonomy for the national minorities, the Tamils and the Muslims. This is the interim arrangement which the TULF is likely to have in mind (and Mr. Chelvanayakam can yet get the Youth Front to agree to it as long as the right to self-determination is not denied in principle).

The question is whether the SLFP will be able to agree to these basic demands of the TULF. These concessions are only a part of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact, and the SLFP can easily invoke the name of Mr. Bandaranaike to justify such a concession to the Tamils. There are indications that a sizable number of SLFP MPs seem willing to concede these demands and come to terms with the TULF.

In this connection, observers have noted that there has been a growing difference of opinion between the UNP

and the TULF. It is said that the UNP had for two years promised to look into the problems of the Tamils and find a solution. The Great Leader, J. R. Jayewardene, had put the matter to the next Great Leader, R. Premadasa, but the UNP has not come forward with any concrete suggestion to resolve the minorities question. And now, it is learnt, the UNP has suggested that the TULF should wait until the elections are over—and that the UNP as the ruling party would do the "right" and "graceful" thing by the Tamils.

The TULF is in no mood to trust the UNP. In fact, the TULF has become suspicious about the UNP. Furthermore, two of the strongest pro-UNP stalwarts in the TULF have in recent months been taken away by death, viz. M. Thiruchelvam and G. G. Ponnambalam. It is in this setting that one must view the current SLFP-TULF meetings. One is scheduled for today, March 9, and more are likely to take place in the coming weeks.

The UNP fears a SLFP-TULF combination not only as a lever to postpone the elections but also a political alliance that would spell disaster to UNP's political fortunes and ambitions in the current period. The UNP has categorically threatened new "communal riots of 1958" if the TULF will help the SLFP. In 1957, the UNP led by J. R. Jayewardene had "marched to Kandy" to break the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact. There is also no doubt that UNP elements were mainly behind the 1958 communal riots. (This part of recent history has to be researched and studied by impartial students of history). No sooner the talks about a possible SLFP-TULF agreement had surfaced, UNP leaders had openly stated as follows: if the Assembly continued to function even for a day after May 22, there would be a civil war; but if the TULF helped to postpone the elections there would be communal war. It will be also recalled that Mr. J. R. Jayewardene had gone to Jaffna and at a meeting announced that if the TULF agreed to help the SLFP to postpone the election or come to any agreement, he

would stage another "March to Kandy". This statement by the Leader of the UNP has widened the growing gap between the UNP and the TULF.

Another significant development is the formation of a *Muslim United Front* which agrees with the TULF that national minorities should have the right of self determination. In the coming elections—or an election in the future—the MUF is likely to co-operate with the TULF which has agreed in principle to concede a region in the Eastern Province for Muslim autonomy. The MUF is opposed to the demand of Muslim ultras who want a Muslim State in the Eastern Province and who are in a mood to seek Libyan and Arab help to establish it—in the way the Muslims in the Philippines have achieved their goal.

Interesting developments are taking place everyday and history in the raw is in the making at a rapid pace.

COVER

ON THE COVER this week we have a scene from a shanty residential plot in the city of Colombo. In fact, Colombo and nearly all the urban areas in Sri Lanka, are full of such mini-shanty towns. Such shanties are also a feature of nearly all towns in South and Southeast Asia, and probably in all of Africa and Latin America. Even highly industrialised countries, the most affluent among the affluent, have shanty and slum areas. Will these eye-sores and breeding ground of disease, crime and sub-human life be ever erased from the face of the earth? In the old days, when man lived in caves, he did not have "modern conveniences", but he had healthy and unpolluted environmental surroundings. In the villages, before the advent of modernity, life was simple but healthy. The cities today have what are called "modern conveniences"—electricity, water, sewage, hospitals, cinemas, playing fields and what not—but, are people any happier, or healthier or wiser? In fact, there is no doubt that life, as a whole, is much worse than in the primitive village communities. What price, civilisation?

SRI LANKA CHRONICLE

Feb. 24 — Mar. 5

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

CDN—Ceylon Daily News; CDM—Ceylon Daily Mirror;
CO—Ceylon Observer; ST—Sunday Times; DM—Dina-
mina; LD—Lankadipa; VK—Virakesari; ATH—Aththa;
SM—Silumina; SLD—Sri Lankadipa; JD—Janadina.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24: The government yesterday decided to pay higher salaries to doctors in State service; all grades of doctors will also be allowed to indulge in channelled consultation practice to be worked out on a co-operative basis; doctors who opt to resort to channelled consultation practice will however not be eligible to receive enhanced salary allowances; these were two of the major decisions taken by the government yesterday. A military goodwill mission from China will arrive here this morning on a seven day visit. The government yesterday decided to increase the combined allowances of all categories of government servants who go out of their home stations on circuit. The College of Ayurvedic Medicine will be raised to varsity status in May this year; it will function under the University of Sri Lanka from the new academic year; initially, it will be an institute in the university, like the institute of aesthetic studies; it will later be brought under the administration of the Colombo Campus. The District Judge of Colombo yesterday acquitted Mr. S. Thillainathan, Chief Reporter of Express Newspapers (Ceylon) Ltd. of a charge of refusing to disclose a source of information—CDN. The appointment of 5000 uncertified teachers is now uncertain as no financial provision has been made for this, according to Education Department sources. The public hardly needs to be reminded of our demands and will no doubt appreciate our intense frustration on learning that despite the written assurance of the Minister, no headway has been made towards settling the demands of the Association says a joint press release issued by the GMOA and the AMS in defence of their recent trade union action. The Leftists in Sri Lanka had not guided the people on the correct path to effect a radical socialist and economic transformation of the country, said Mr. Mahinda Wijesekera, General Secretary of the newly-formed Mahajana Vimukthi Peramuna at the New Town Hall yesterday; he also said that his party was formed with the intention of liberating the people through a fixed policy by changing the economic system. The Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions (CP-controlled) has requested the PM to sever all trade ties with South Africa—CDM. Four MP's who left the Government parliamentary group this month have formed a new political party, the Sri Lanka Mahajana Prajathanthravadi Pakshaya. Sri Lanka's share of the Australian tea market is declining, reports this country's Trade Commissioner based in Sydney—CO. The Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, and other members of the SLFP may quit the government parliamentary group soon it is believed said N. M. Perera, leader of the LSSP at a meeting—LD.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25: Manufacturers of matches have been given a final warning by the Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs that if they do not improve the quality of their product all their applications will be withdrawn; the government will only agree to a price increase for boxes of matches if there is an improvement in quality. The Minister of Finance yesterday suggested an investment framework for Sri Lanka which had been suggested to the late PM, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike by the famous Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal; the Minister announced this at the concluding sessions of the World Intellectual Property Organisation symposium. The Minister of Broadcasting and Information has appointed a new board of directors for the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. The GMOA and the AMS yesterday wrote to the Health Minister seeking finalisation of the decision taken by the government on Wednesday with regard to the outstanding demands of the two unions. The Yugoslav Minister of Information, Mr. Berderovic arrived yesterday on a two day visit—CDN. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting yesterday confirmed that he would not seek election at the forthcoming polls; the other Minister who supports him in opposing the postponement of elections is Mr. T. B. Subasinghe; there is considerable speculation in political circles that Mr. Subasinghe will resign from office. The newly-formed People's democratic Party was inaugurated yesterday; the party symbol is an arc of six stars with a large star in the centre; it was decided to form a Progressive National Front with the other progressive parties such as the CP and the LSSP. The government has allocated Rs. 74 million for the import of the additional quantum of rice to be given on ration during 1977. Two hospitals, one in Colombo and one in Kandy will be acquired by the government to introduce the new Channelled Consultative Scheme—the green light was given by the government on Wednesday; the scheme in its entirety will be run by the co-operative department—CDM. Following an appeal made by the Minister of Trade and Public Administration, to GA's and other officials in the provincial administration of the country that they should give their unstinted support and cooperation to the elections department to conduct the General Elections efficiently, the PM graciously offered to MP's an allocation for undertaking rural electrification schemes in their areas which did not exceed Rs. 3000,000. In the light of the good Maha crop expected and the heavy purchases of Thai rice, it is considered very likely that the rice ration will be increased. According to a top official of the Cement Corporation, six thousand tons of KKS cement is available right now for issue to house builders; but the official said that the cement supply situation was such that 'plentiful stocks' were still not freely available in the market. The Department of Inland Revenue netted a tax haul of Rs. 1720 million in 1976; this is the highest revenue collected by the Department during its 40 year long period of existence—CO.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26: The government proposes to revive the Special Committee, which kept prices down during the non-aligned summit meeting said the PM yesterday addressing Political Authorities and Government Agents at the Central Bank Auditorium. The PM said in the course of her address that elections would be held in six month's time. Prof. K. Kailasapathy, President of the Jaffna Campus, and a student deputation met the Vice Chancellor at the

Senate house to discuss various problems faced by the Jaffna Campus: from today a new office comes into being to liaison between the new Housing and Construction Minister and the General Public. Victor Gorbachko and Yuri Glazkov returned to earth today after successful conclusion of the program on board the Salyut 5 orbital scientific station—CDN. A top team of Indian experts will attend the Indo-Sri Lanka talks on smuggling in Colombo next month. The government will soon introduce a permanent law to ensure the continuance of the five-day week—CDM. The government has decided before the General Election to give an increased ration of 1½ measures of rice at Rs. 1.40 a measure; this order has already gone to the Food Department; this will apply more to the Colombo area, seaside towns and places where there is no paddy cultivation—ATH.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27: Over one million (1,162,557) more than the number eligible in 1970 will have the right to vote at the forthcoming general election; according to the final figures compiled by the Commissioner of Parliamentary Elections the total number of voters for this election will be 6,667,585 as against 5,505,028 in 1970. Elsewhere in the Northern foothills of Kandy has yielded yet another multi-million rupee vein of precious stones in shallow diggings; efforts were being made by the State Gem Corporation to stem the illicit operations of illicit miners in this 250 acre block of state owned land. That shortage of toilet soap which you are now experiencing is not likely to last long; Lever Brothers one of the country's leading soap manufacturers said yesterday that it would commence manufacture this week of toilet and washing soaps for the domestic markets at full capacity—SO. The Sri Lanka Nationalised Banking Corporation Bill to take over the local branches of three privately-owned foreign Banks is to be categorized as urgent so that the Constitutional Court's advice on it could be communicated to the Speaker of the National State Assembly within 24 hours of the Bill being referred to the court. Despite the maritime zones of Sri Lanka having been proclaimed last month, reports continue to be received of Indian boats fishing in our waters, particularly on the old pier side of Talaimannar—ST. August 8 will be the probable date of the first general election to be held in the Republic of Sri Lanka according to source which are close to the PM—VK.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28: The PM, addressing a mass rally in Kolonnawa yesterday said that some people had urged the government not to hold the elections because they had a reasonable fear that if Mr. J. R. Jayewardene came to power he would set up a fascist dictatorship in this country; they knew that J. R. was not Dudley, but the people had the solution in their own hands; when elections are held in six months, she asked them to vote the government back to power. The designations—superintendents and Assistants superintendents of estates are abolished; holders of the posts will in future be called managers and assistant managers of estates; this has been decided by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands because the existing designations hark back to a colonial era. The largest block rubber factory in Sri Lanka costing Rs. 8 million is now being constructed at Durampitiya near Avissawella. The government will call for the suspension of standing orders in order to vote certain urgent bills of national interest when the NSA meets on May 19, according to authoritative sources; the government has already decided to vote three bills—amendment of the law to provide for a five

day week, the abolition of the rajakariya system of tenure of temple and devale lands and the nationalisation of the branches of the three foreign owned banks before the period of the NSA ends constitutionally after May 22—CDM. The NSA will be dissolved on May 21 and the general election will be held democratically, not fearing threats of satyagraha but to respect the elementary principles of democracy; this was said by the PM at a meeting at Heggala in the Attanagalla electorate. Several opposition MP's are of the view that as the gazetting of a bill is part of parliamentary procedure the proposed bill to nationalise private foreign banks cannot be gazetted until after prorogation. The Working Committee of the Tamil Youth Front—the body of the Tamil United Liberation Front met at the residence of the TULF leader yesterday and passed two resolutions; One resolution called upon the TULF not to negotiate with any party on any matters outside the resolutions passed at the TULF sessions held in Vaddukoddai and the other resolution states that they would support any candidate put forward by the TULF at the forthcoming elections. The Ceylon Mercantile Union and the Revolutionary Marxist Party will hold a joint rally on March 9 at Hyde Park. The supply of drugs to five divisional drug stores has been stopped by the Civil Medical Stores Storekeepers Union in protest against the failure of the Ministry of Health to solve their grievances. Coconuts and coconut oil reached record prices in the city and suburbs from Saturday; yesterday coconut oil was sold at Rs. 6.75 a bottle while coconuts were sold at Rs. 1.25 each—CDM. Mr. T. B. Ilangaratne, has in the presence of the PM at Kolonnawa requested the CP and LSSP to join the Government once again. The LSSP is engaged in trying to bring together the "progressive forces" which are opposed to the UNP and SLFP—VK.

TUESDAY, MARCH 1: Peasants who have been allotted state land will soon be given the option of buying the land outright or on a rent-purchase basis according to a decision of the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, peasants who purchase the land outright will be entitled to a 20% rebate; those who opt to buy on the rent-purchase basis will be allowed the facility of paying the value of the land in 20 annual instalments interest-free. The Opposition will seek priority under government business for its motion of no-confidence and the matter of breach of privilege raised by the leader of the opposition when the NSA meets on May 19 and 20. Workers on seventy estate committees in the Pussellawa, Punduluoya and Gampola districts struck work yesterday protesting against what they claimed was a lay-off of 500 estate employees in the Choicy estate, Punduloya; Strikers claimed 50,000 had joined the work stoppage. The Committee system of administration now restricted to Municipal Councils will be extended shortly to all local authorities. The company Metcan Ltd. set up with technical collaboration with the giant Metalbox Company of Singapore will manufacture metal containers for the country's food packaging industry; it will go into production early in August—CDN. Work in almost all hospitals in the Colombo group came to a virtual standstill as pharmacists, laboratory technologists, physiotherapists and X-ray technicians walked out from their work places and stormed the Ministry of Health yesterday. Several small time millers feel that though the drought and the shortfall in coconut production have a bearing on prices, the high price the two items fetched at pre-

sent were unwarranted; they feel that this is because two or three big time millers are virtually stockpiling the stocks of copra in view of the high prices.—CDM. Mr. T. B. Subasinghe, the Minister of Industries and Scientific Affairs, resigned from office this morning; addressing a gathering of Ministry employees and industrial corporation chairman who came to the ministry today, he said that he could not in conscience agree with some of the decisions taken by the government in recent times; remaining in the government in these circumstances would neither be fair to the government nor himself—CO. The leader of the UNP has been having discussions with the Tamil-speaking MP's in his party, with the view of solving the problems of the Tamils—VK. Before the next general elections, the Dudley Perumana may join the UNP and an important person in the party has called for round table conference—LD. Even though five weeks have elapsed since the Wimalaratne Commission report was handed over to the President, no action has so far been taken on the matter and the students union of the Peradeniya Campus has demanded that something be done about it—ATH.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2: The price of rice has come down in the Western Province following an impressive harvest. The Chairman of the Paddy Marketing Board has said; he said that the indications are that the prices of rice will remain low till July this year in the open market due to the predictively record maha harvest; the PMB is geared to purchase 20,000,000 bushels of paddy from the maha crop which will extend to May in certain areas; the open market price of samba rice in the city should be around Rs. 2.50 a measure he said. The para medical staff of the General Hospital Colombo who staged a walk out on Monday morning returned to work a few hours later after an assurance given by the Health Minister that their problems would be looked into—CDN. The Tamil United Liberation Front has asked the PM for a separate meeting to ensure that the present dialogue on the Tamil minority problems yields fruitful results. There was complete chaos in co-operatives in Colombo and the suburbs in the distribution of imported textiles yesterday. Two students are reported to have been killed in the course of a quarrel among students in the Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka. Medical Officers of Health, particularly in the Rural areas have stopped attending on patients at maternity, child welfare and family health clinics and so hundreds are turned away daily; this is apparently because the GMOA and the AMS have initiated this in protest against the department's failure to increase their travelling and subsistence rates—CDM.

THURSDAY, MARCH 3: The People's Bank will assist the country's 360 multi-purpose co-operative societies by providing them credit facilities to buy pulses and vegetables direct from the producer; it will also help them to transport these commodities to scarce areas, especially urban centres, where vegetables and pulses now fetch high prices owing to the middlemen; in this way the People's Bank hopes to help bring down the average urban worker's cost of living. The FAO last week approved a WFB grant of 2.6 million dollars in emergency food aid to Sri Lanka to help meet the needs of drought victims—CDN. Current rumors about the MP for Dedigama, Mr. Rukman Senanayake, being readmitted to the UNP were scotched by the 'Journal' the UNP's bi-weekly publication. Eleven cargo vessels are in the port of Sri Lanka now discharging rice, flour and sugar—CDM.

FRIDAY, MARCH 4: Workers in the state owned tea and rubber plantations are assured of 21 working days each month, according to a decision of the Minister of Agriculture and Lands; this will provide for the security service for estates labour for the first time in the history of the plantation sector covering a period of over 100 years. The TULF is proposing to contest the leader of the UNP in his stronghold, Colombo East, where the TULF thinks it has a substantial minority vote—CDN. The PM in a letter to Mr. T. B. Subasinghe has asked him why he was so inaudible about the 'invisible government'. Mr. Pieter Keuneman, general secretary of the CP of Sri Lanka, said yesterday that there was great interest and hope matters progressive circles about the efforts to re-group these forces in a new United Front; the CP would do all it could to make these efforts successful. Storekeepers of the Health Department are poised for direct trade union action; according to one of their spokesmen, nothing has been done to redress their grievances despite assurances from the Minister of Health. Over 630 cases of profiteering in essential commodities were detected by price control men in January and February—CDM. The world price of coffee has increased eightfold and the price of tea has reached heights which it has never before reached—VK. There is confusion in most city co-operative depts where textiles were issued yesterday; it was blackmarketeers and thugs who dominated the queues and genuine customers had to go away disappointed; consumers also complained that there was no law and order in the depots, and some unscrupulous employees in them utilised the circumstances to help the blackmarketeers—CO. The high-ups in the police have instructed the Jaffna Police to give protection to the students in the Jaffna Campus. The Vice Chancellor of the University has said that there was no trouble within the Campus but some outsiders had assaulted the students and therefore caused trouble—LD.

SATURDAY, MARCH 5: The Minister of Agriculture and Lands has instructed the Janawasama to ensure that registered voters in estates taken over for land alienation are found employment within the electorate itself as far as possible; the channelled consultation scheme which was approved by the cabinet last month will be put into operation from the beginning of April. An international Buddhist missionary institute will be set up shortly in Sri Lanka—CDN. The Ministry of Planning and economic affairs has earmarked a record sum of Rs. 675 million for the private sector industries as advance allocation for this year. Although the excise department stopped the sale of arrack in taverns and bars in barrels in order to eliminate dilution many patrons still find the arrack sold from the bottle diluted. The new terminal building at the BIA which was closed after the non-aligned conference has reopened for operations. The state-controlled Gas Company which earlier ran at a loss of 9,000 per month is now making a profit of Rs. two lakhs per month—CDM. The TULF has refused to give nominations to candidates in the forthcoming general elections if they are not willing to work on a full time basis for the TULF—VK.

GENERAL ELECTION

PPP vs PNA

By Abdullah Malik

By courtesy of the weekly *Mainstream*, we reprint this which was published in the well-known weekly *Viewpoint* (February 4, 1977), of Lahore, edited by Mazhar Ali Khan and was received through the courtesy of Public Opinion Trends Analyses and News Service, New Delhi. The second instalment of this contribution published this week, will analyse the Opposition's candidates, strategies and tactics.

IT IS NOT EASY to gauge the constantly changing trend of public opinion during election time, particularly in the developing countries like ours where neither Press nor other information media have much credibility and where public opinion polls are unheard of.

One way to measure the strength and popularity of the various parties and groups would be to assess the number of people who flock to their meetings. But this too is a chancy method; given the great curiosity of our people for a public gathering, any gathering. However, if one party continues to attract crowds even for curiosity then, maybe, it could be taken as an indication of that party's popularity.

On that rough basis, it may be said that at the moment, in the urban areas there is a swing towards the Pakistan National Alliance. Its public meetings in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Peshawar, and Lahore are pointers to this.

The swing is by and large sudden and unexpected. One aspect is clear—and nobody has any doubts on this count—that the trend is largely a negative one. People are attracted to the PNA not because of what it has to offer, but to express their resentment with the ruling party's functioning.

That is why, in constituencies where the contest is between sitting members of the National or Provincial Assembly of the Pakistan People's Party and the PNA the resentment against the PPP

is expressed vigorously and the party candidate is put awkward questions, particularly if he happens to be a Minister.

THE OPPOSITION merged together in the PNA is exploiting the anti-PPP feeling to the maximum. As a matter of fact, the PNA has evolved most of its strategy and tactics on the basis of the mistakes committed by the People's Party. Not only is the Opposition trying to play the role which Mr Bhutto played in 1970, it has made the People's Party go on the defensive in certain respects.

Mr Bhutto is trying to pin the Opposition down to a discussion on socio-economic reforms and foreign policy—hence the White Papers and reports on foreign policy issues and economic reforms. But it appears that the Opposition is not rising to the bait. It does not want to fight on Mr. Bhutto's territory, and is, therefore, concentrating on the alleged dictatorial trends of the regime and rising prices. This attack, is understandably, attracting the public.

Had the ruling party anticipated the present swing when it decided to call for an election? One wonders. Meanwhile, the emergency of the anti-PPP trend is a pointer to certain glaring mistakes committed by the party.

Its biggest handicap is that throughout its tenure its workers never initiated any political debate. All the talking was done by the opposing parties or by Mr. Bhutto. The ban on public meetings hindered the political process. Issues of concern to the public were not rationally discussed or objectively explained, such as the rise in the cost of living and inflation.

So, today, these issues have become election issues. When Asghar Khan declares at a huge public meeting that if the PNA comes to power, it will bring down the prices to the 1970 level, from the economists' point of view it may look ridiculous. But it catches the imagination of the common man and the housewife and is a politically lively slogan.

The PPP itself appears to have reckoned that the political process stalled, there would be little political debate, and it might be safe to rope in feudals with maj-

ority *biradaris*. Thus, we took our politics back to the twenties and thirties and the political consciousness unleashed by the PPP has partly been reversed by the party itself.

IT SEEMS the PPP never realised the pitfalls in going back to the feudals. The biggest is that the arena has been left open to the *biradaris* and clans ignored in the selection of tickets. In many places, the PPP ticket, has been given to the minority *biradari*, providing an opportunity to the Opposition to exploit the majority clan. Sahiwal is a glaring example of such bungling. There, tickets have been allotted mostly to the Rajputs, and the Arains have been ignored totally. This has happened in some other places also.

The other mistake concerns the fact that many of the feudals who have been awarded PPP tickets were in the Opposition camp in the last election and were defeated. So, it is improbable that the PPP workers will enthusiastically support the official candidates. Thus, at many places, workers have become inactive and at some places they have joined the Opposition camp openly, or secretly.

Those feudals who belong to traditional election-fighting families have their own methods of electioneering. The People's Party workers, on the other hand, are the product of a political process; despite their infirmities and inefficiency, they speak a political language which is not known to the feudals, most of whom have to rely on their own workers.

An interesting situation has, therefore, arisen; while the feudals have been awarded tickets of a political party which is committed to socialism as far as economics is concerned, both PPP and PNA candidates are raising anti-socialist slogans. In some constituencies, there is little difference between the PNA and PPP candidates in their political, social, and economic approach.

The entire atmosphere is full of somewhat obscurantist and negative slogans, and no debate is taking place on concrete socio-economic issues or foreign policy aspects of the Government.

The other day, in a small gathering of Punjab Ministers, Federal Minister Meraj Khalid was empha-

sising the need to rouse party workers and motivate voters, when a Punjab Minister immediately rebuffed him by asking why the motivation was not stressed earlier, say, three, or four years ago. Now, he said, they will fight the election keeping in mind the specific requirements of different areas and constituencies. This is the political situation which is being exploited by the PNA, and at the moment the PPP's failures are the PNA's biggest assets.

Another factor likely to have an impact on the election—though it may not be very visible—is the Indian situation. Mr. Bhutto admitted the other day at his Press conference at Lahore airport that though Pakistan and India were different, the pattern of policies was somewhat similar in the two countries, and what happened on one side of the border was bound to have an impact on the other.

But, despite the swing towards the PNA, the Alliance is handicapped on account of its composition. Its components have different and divergent approaches to the country's problems. And when the electors come to brass tacks, they will have to choose one party and one leader, because this is the only guarantee of stability—and this reality is known to Mr. Bhutto. That may be the secret of his confidence.

Concluded

INDIAN ELECTIONS

The Last Lap

New Delhi, February 16,

This week the campaign for the Lok Sabha election has begun in right earnest with the final selection of candidates and their initial approach to the voter. A significant feature of the election is that the total number of candidates is far less this time than in any previous General Election: as against 2800 for 520 Lok Sabha seats in 1971 the number of candidates this time is less than 1500 for the increased Lok Sabha strength of 542. It brings out the fact that vote splitting will be much less this time than in any previous election; in other words, the Congress would have to face straight contest in many more

seats all over the country than in the past, which, in turn, would ensure to a large measure that the number of seats to be won would be in fair proportion to its total poll score. It has to be borne in mind that even in the best days of Nehru the Congress never got more than 47 per cent of the total votes polled.

Understandably, the Congress leadership has fielded all its old hands including a couple of decrepit Governors. On top of this, the hope is entertained that in the crucial days immediately after the poll, a helping hand or two may be lent by an obliging Biju Patnaik or a Charan Singh, to get the Congress the necessary support.

The key slogan of stability that Indira Gandhi has introduced for the Congress election campaign is not likely to catch as effectively today as it would have in the pre-Emergency days. For one thing, Emergency itself had been imposed on the plea of rescuing the country from anarchy, and yet Emergency raj witnessed the most destabilising factional fight within the ruling party to the point of toppling Chief Ministers belonging to the party itself.

Secondly, the iron hand of the Establishment perpetrated many extra-constitutional acts unheard of in any democratic structure, so much so that any normal relationship between the rulers and the ruled was totally undermined; and as a result, the social base of the executive was getting narrowed down. In other words, despite the show of force inevitable in it, Emergency itself has weakened the stability of the Government.

Since the Prime Minister has chosen to go in for the poll without lifting Emergency and all its consequential effects, there is good reason for the public to suspect—even without the Opposition prodding—that the return to power of the present Establishment does not, on its own, ensure national stability. For, alienation of the Government from the people can never reinforce the stability of any raj.

From the indications so far available, the key issue that is going to dominate this election is Emergency itself. If the election was held without the galling fetters of the arbitrary powers still being

wielded by the Government, perhaps the iron would not have entered the soul of the nation. But since wisdom does not always descend upon a government riding roughshod over any opposition, the bitterness generated by the high-handed actions from indiscriminate use of MISA to total stifling of press freedom, to forcible sterilisation, to suppression of civil liberties to the point of paralysis of all forms of political activity—all these promise to figure very prominently in the entire election campaign.

Many of the Congress candidates while disapproving in private such reversal of democratic process, would be hard put to defending the Government's Emergency record—a point where the Congress for Democracy though young in age and comparatively small in number, would have a definite advantage.

It is amazing how the massive paraphernalia of the Family Planning drive has vanished almost overnight. The sterilisation registration camps with loud-speakers blaring film music to attract (or detract) crowd, manned by the strange band of "dedicated" Youth Congress workers reared under Emergency—a common sight in the Capital street-corners—have literally disappeared. In the election campaign bazar, Family Planning is not surely a vote-catcher after the depredations committed in its name including generous dose of police shooting in many of the northern States. How scared are the authorities about it all can be gauged from the fact that hospitals today are chary of admitting even a normal voluntary case of sterilisation in the Capital.

The fate of the other items of the famous Five-Point programme can well be imagined, no matter how much of the good money of the exchequer was squandered on this youthful absurdity pampered by Congress elders who should have known better.

Down the same road to brisk oblivion has gone the Prime Minister's very own Twenty-Point Programme which was supposed to usher in a new era of socio-economic advance. How much of ballyhoo was let off over it—speeches galore, exhortations in abundance, hoardings, pamphlets and books on the politics, economics and philosophy of the earthshaking

Twenty Points swept the country for full eighteen months. But today, where are those Twenty Points? Even the Congress Election Manifesto makes only nodding references to them.

Those who had seriously taken these Twenty Points are today not only disenchanted but definitely embittered, thanks to the Government's patently hypocritical attitude towards their implementation. Some of the Twenty Points are unexceptionable, and it is as dishonest to totally forget them today as it was to have glorified them as revolutionary yesterday. The socio-economic programme of Emergency—if there was one (since it is common knowledge in New Delhi that the Twenty Points came as an after-thought following the imposition of Emergency to provide it with a respectable alibi)—has turned out to be as phoney as the Government's claim that Emergency was needed to contain inflation.

At the same time, Emergency has not been without its social impact. The working class may have been harassed with impounded DA, denial of statutory bonus, cuts in real wage, the spectre of lay-off and retrenchment leading to ever-lengthening shadow of unemployment. Not so are the Birlas. Not only have they outstripped the Tatas for the position of Number One among the Indian Big Business, but have augmented their profits from Rs. 92 crores in 1972-73 to Rs. 130 crores in 1975-76, and their total assets from Rs. 725 crores in 1972-73 to Rs. 1064 crores in 1975-76.

Obviously, the Birlas never had it so good as under Emergency. While little to bother over the protracted enquiry into their irregularities—spotlighted years ago by Chandra Shekhar—now safely put on the shelf, they are today the closest to the Establishment. Under the umbrella of Emergency, they are trying in a big way to invite dollar capital into this country. B.M. Birla has pleaded before the Indo-US Joint Business Council for 100 billion dollars of foreign capital (at the rate of ten billion dollars or Rs. 9000 crores a year). He has good reason for earning the blessings of the Establishment, one of whose stars has been fixing up agencies for US companies such as the International Harvester and the Piper Aircraft. Obviously, the

multinationals are gaining respectability under the aegis of Emergency.

Not to be left in the cold, J.R.D. Tata has valiantly given a purple-patch testimonial for Emergency published as a special interview in Birla's own daily. Of course, there are other well-placed beneficiaries of Emergency beholden to the Establishment—from the Jains to the Kapadias, with their own cupboards full of stinking skeletons safely locked up under the Emergency dispensation.

Garibi Hatao of 1971 seems to mock at the poor today. In its place can be heard the million voiced demand, rising in crescendo—Emergency Hatao!

Every day's delay makes it more difficult for Indira Gandhi to meet this challenge.

—N.C.

INDIA'S NEWS AGENCY

Samachar sans Sadachar

Reproduced herebelow is the Editorial in the February 1977 issue of *The Working Journalist*, journal of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists.

On January 24, 1977, Samachar celebrated the first anniversary of its birth. The Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Sri Vidya Charan Shukla, was the chief guest at a reception hosted by the agency's Chairman and Managing Committee members at Samachar Bhavan in New Delhi. Simultaneously mini-receptions were held at the agency's branch offices throughout the country.

It was on January 24 last year that Samachar was registered as a society by a group of news-papermen following the Government's decision to terminate All India Radio's subscriptions to PTI and UNI.

From February 1, 1976 the Samachar logo appeared in the newspapers in place of the familiar PTI and UNI creditlines as well as that of Samachar Bharati and Hindustan Samachar, although the four news agencies continued to function separately.

On April 2, 1976 the wire services of PTI and UNI were integrated to become the English-language service of Samachar and the Samachar Bharati and Hindustan Samachar services were combined to become the Hindi service of Samachar. Two more months passed by before the agency's offices in various parts of the country were brought together in a unified set-up.

Ironically, when Samachar was celebrating its first birthday and being applauded by Sri Shukla in Delhi and State Ministers at various State capitals, its personnel from the General Manager down wards were in the throes of uncertainty.

Months after the PTI UNI, and other agencies bowed out of the scene, handing over their men and machines to Samachar, the employees were still borne on the separate rolls of these agencies. Those like the General Manager who had been given Samachar appointments were holding their positions in an "acting" or "honorary" capacity. The agency's employees, scattered all over the country, were holding aloft the Samachar flag without being brought on the rolls of this organisation.

At the time of the formation of Samachar, Government spokesmen had told the employees' representatives that employees would be brought together into a unified set-up within three months. However, at the anniversary function, the Chairman, Sri G. Kasturi, could not be more specific than to say that the integration of the staff would be completed soon. Since the process was still to begin, this promise brought no cheer to the staff.

On the administrative side, Samachar has been in a state of paralysis for most of last year. With authority diffused at various points, decision-making has been no easy task. The Managing Committee comprises mostly newspaper owners. Thus, control vests essentially in the same hands as the old agencies. The employees and the working journalists' movement are not represented in the Committee. The big newspapers which have a big say are unwilling to pay the news agency more than they paid the old agencies. As a result, the agency lacks the funds needed to expand activities, especially abroad.

A notable achievement of the past year is that Samachar has been able to activate the few correspondents sent abroad by PTI and increase their output significantly. It has also been circulating to newspapers in India material drawn from the news files of the agencies of other nonaligned nations. However, there has hardly been any reduction in the dependence upon the Western news agencies.

Contrary to the impression given by official spokesmen, Samachar does not seem to have been assigned any significant role in the Non-aligned Agencies Pool. Along with several other agencies, Samachar has been recognised as a regional centre for dissemination to be undertaken on behalf of the Pool members. At the Cairo meeting of the Pool Co-ordination Committee, headed by Sri Yunus, certain common tasks like training of personnel and standardisation of equipment were identified and entrusted with other smaller agencies.

The most tragic aspect of the failure to integrate the staff into a single cadre has been that the employees continue to think in terms of their old loyalties instead of developing a new Samachar loyalty.

The Samachar Managing Committee, meeting immediately after the first anniversary celebrations, appointed Dr. Raj K. Nigam, Director in the Bureau of Public Enterprises, as the agency's Managing Director. The acting General Manager, Sri Wilfred Lazarus, was re-designated Director of News.

The introduction of Dr. Nigam meant a departure from the traditions set up by India's oldest news agency under which executive authority always vested in journalistic hands. He is credited with a desire to complete the process of integration of the agencies within three months.

While Sri Shukla and the Prime Minister's Special Envoy, Sri Mohammad Yunus, who is a member of the Samachar's Managing Committee, thought Samachar had done well in its first year, the Opposition leaders thought otherwise. Some of them wanted Samachar to be converted into an autonomous corporation. They even incorporated the demand among the conditions set by them to ensure that the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections will be free and fair.

The Janata Party's analysis of Samachar's role at a Press briefing at Delhi irked the agency's correspondent so much that he threatened to walk out in protest against the "vilification" of the organisation. To avoid the possibility of acrimonious arguments between party spokesmen and agency reporters, the management officially advised the staff not to enter into a public debate on the agency's conduct.

Samachar's working in the first year was characterised by a steady decline in the standards of journalism. Lacking effective professional leadership, it was reduced to the level of an extension of the official information machinery. Consequently, its credibility was eroded considerably.

When a section of the Congress leadership launched a campaign against the Communist Party of India, Samachar, instead of confining itself to reporting developments, took upon itself the task of furthering the anti-communist cause. When the CPI General Secretary, Sri C. Rajeswara Rao, explained the party's attitude towards the 20-point programme and the 5-point programme at Bhopal, Samachar's Delhi office circulated a distorted version of what its Bhopal bureau had reported.

When the CPI's National Council was in session in Bangalore, Samachar's Delhi office put out under Bangalore dateline an alleged inside account of the deliberations. The concoction was so bizarre that the Bangalore bureau felt obliged to protest to the head office. Three days later, Samachar put out a contradiction which must be rated as a classic in abject confession. It said that on further verification the earlier report could not be confirmed!

Any news organisation which lays store by objectivity and integrity would have made a thorough investigation to find out how it came to circulate a report which could not be confirmed. If Samachar has conducted such an investigation, it must have done so in utmost secrecy, for no one is aware that such an inquiry has been held. Meanwhile, there are reports that the impugned story was planted on the agency by a caucus through an obliging reporter, who managed to get it circulated without the

knowledge of the Editor. It is said that the anti-CPI piece was but the first of a series of slanderous material manufactured with a view to defaming selected political adversaries.

While political leaders and political parties are slandered with impunity, Samachar brazenly went to the rescue of discredited businessmen. Last month, a Delhi court convicted Ram Krishna Dalmia, Shanti Prasad Jain and a host of their accomplices to various jail terms for diverting Rs 3.5 crores of company funds for personal benefit. This was a sequel to the inquiry by the Vivian Bose Commission, and the CBI had pursued the gang for as many as 23 years before they were given their deserts.

The PIB issued a summary of the court verdict, Samachar credited it. And then the caucus struck. The story was "killed". No apology. Incidentally, Dr. Ram Tarneja, an ace executive of the House of Dalmia Jains whose name adorns even the imprint line of the *Times of India*, is in a key position in Samachar. Ironically enough, the Doctor is also associated with a trust which gives annual awards for excellence in journalism.

National Herald wrote an angry editorial comment on the unpardonable conduct of the agency. It even asked Samachar to tender an explanation to the reading public. It is yet to come. Obviously, we cannot expect any such grace from Samachar berft of *sadachar*.

Sri Jayaprakash Narayan, at a recent Press conference in Delhi, deplored Samachar's suppression of the story of Dalmia-Jains. But, while highlighting everything else he said, large sections of the monopoly Press, *Indian Express* group in particular, blacked out the reference to the blackout. It is something for the Western media to chew over, for it has been lauding Ramnathji as the paragon of editorial virtues.

The Indian Federation of Working Journalists has always pleaded that the news agency should be run by a public corporation, set up under a Parliamentary enactment so that it is accountable to elected representatives of the nation. Samachar's one year of disgrace only reinforces this reasonable demand.

Academic Freedom

By P. Chandrasegaram
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AUTONOMY OF UNIVERSITIES

is a prerequisite for the development of the institution and also of the nation which the Universities are expected to develop. "The University" is not outside but is inside the general social fabric of a given era. It is an expression of the age as well as an influence operating upon both present and future." Complementary, if not auxiliary to autonomy, is academic freedom in and of Universities. Academic freedom is an individual's basic freedom of thought and expression. But in relation to universities and their relations to society and the government academic freedom becomes both individual and institutional.

This freedom expresses itself in various ways.

It is fundamental that an institution of higher learning should be able to prescribe its own courses and adopt its own way of examination. This would mean that freedom to determine the curricula and 'standards' is basic to the freedom of the University. Standards is a relative concept which is contextual. The contention that 'liberty of experiment with content and method is one of the surest guarantees of efficiency and discovery' is quite apt as far as university education is concerned. Education is discovery at any level and it is more so at the higher educational level.

FREEDOM OF ADMISSION to the Universities is another cherished freedom which institutions should enjoy. In Sri Lanka we have imposed the spurious system of media-wise standardization without any science behind it. The system of restricted quota particularly for Tamil candidates seeking university admission introduced in 1970 and continued in subsequent years under other service is also anti-educational. This has in fact resulted in psychological and political frustration among the youth. The Universities should be free to choose whom they teach. Since there is some connection between the schools

and the Universities in this regard there should be some system of consultation between them. Freedom of admission by Universities is an educational tenet of academic freedom.

Teaching and research are twin functions of universities. The universities should have the freedom to determine the connection between teaching and research. A positive combination between teaching and research expresses the intimacy of both the educational aspects. This also evaluates the academic efficiency of the institutions. Teaching should be creative, critical and inspirational. Research should be productive in the sense that the findings of research should develop a nation psychologically, intellectually, economically, socially and culturally.

Freedom from political interference which is inevitable under a system where political considerations supersede educational considerations, is another freedom which universities should safeguard. It has been the verdict of history that universities have been made the base for unhealthy propaganda as for example in the case of pre-war Germany and in present South Africa. "National Socialism" as a theory was formulated in Germany and is being done in South Africa, by political interference of government in the academic freedom of universities.

Development in growth and change, change is economic, social, and cultural. It is also qualitative and quantitative. The Universities of today while being the sanctuaries of the inner life of the nations have also to re-orient themselves to the basic of development. The universities must transmit in a more differentiated and more specific way the cultural heritage, the history, scientific knowledge, the literature of their societies and of world culture of which society is a part. They should also train, if not educate, persons who will become of their societies, to exercise skills in science administrations and management.

It is incumbent on the part of the universities to cultivate the capacity of leadership of people, and develop in them a sense of responsibility to their fellow countrymen. Here the university becomes

an institution of leadership and society conscious. universities in many countries of the world have given leadership to independence movements, national freedom and social reform. Countries like India and Israel could be considered as good examples where universities have played the role of social leadership. These institutions should be continuously critical to be able to initiate changes while appreciating a nation's inheritance. It is imperative that the universities should contribute new knowledge not only to sustain themselves but also to sustain the nation. Added to it it also should contribute knowledge to the world's pool of knowledge and should stimulate the desire for students and teachers to become original contributors to the pool of knowledge of the entire world.

It is true that universities alone cannot produce the kind of people which the modern society needs, but they are certainly in a privileged position for the conduct of the intellectual and social life of the country they serve.

Generally universities should have the liberty to determine their own programme and policy; but it would become necessary to evolve policy and programme in relations to wider national perspectives. The process of making administrative measures should be within and the process of policy making both from within and without, at various levels. Departments of study of universities, the faculties and bodies, the faculty council and the senate are absolutely necessary for the democratic functioning of universities. This means that administrative measures and policy seeking should seep upwards and policy for the university should not be 'promulgated' consist of or administrative orders made from non-university authorities. The university should have the right to formulate and implement policy.

In recent times in Sri Lanka there had been a trend towards negative governmental interference and domination of the educational process and it has been very marked as far as university education is concerned. The very creation of a monolithic single university scheme is a consequence of this deliberate intrusion in university education. Though edu-

cation is undoubtedly an obligation of the state, state interest and concern should not be confused with state control and demonstration with academic policies and practices. The universities should be released from such constraints and encumbrances; this is the surest way to ensure academic freedom in and for university and thereby ensure freedom in the country.



COCONUT CRISIS—I

The Truth

By R. Kahawita

SINCE CHRISTMAS 1976 coconuts and coconut cultivation have been making headline news in the Ceylon Daily News and other Government controlled mass media. Various reasons have been given for the prevailing high prices of coconuts and shortages in coconut production. One leg of the foreign exchange earning tripod of our agricultural products is paralysed and it may be necessary to import—"to our shame" as said by the Prime Minister—coconuts to meet the local consumption demand. Milk producers are giving up the dairy industry as revealed by the Livestock Board. So the chain reaction is going on as a result of the coconut crisis.

The Coconut Cultivation Board (CCB) in a press release said that if manuring is neglected there would be no nuts for the home kitchens as well. The Prime Minister has been advised that the shortage is due to tree cutting, eating of young coconuts cutting of tender leaves for pandals and street decorations for political thamasas—so a ban has gone out not to have receptions with the traditional "gokkolla decorations." But the truth has not been told to the Prime Minister.

According to the analysis of the Coconut Cultivation Board as given by them to the CDN on Christmas day 1976, the shortage is due to non-manuring of coconut estates in the past and the several droughts experienced in recent years.

The analysis of the CCB why more fertilizer is not used by the coconut property owners to-

day compared to the year 1968, is incorrect and misleading. This may be deliberately done to cover the folly of a Minister's Land policies and land management as agricultural units. The study undertaken by the CCB has completely missed the issues and the recommendations made after the so-called "study of the crisis" are unimaginative and impracticable.

In their analysis, the Board officials, do not seem to have solicited the views of the coconut growers and coconut property owners, who really know why the and the wherefore, even for not manuring their properties. Their views are much more important to the industry than the "Study group of the CCB." This group may be just a group of political appointees, whose main desire is to protect their patrons and stay in their jobs rather than guide the industry.

The shortfall in the supply of nuts was experienced at the end of 1976—and spotlighted by the Christmas day news release of the CCB—just two years after the Lands take over and also at the end of the factor which begins to reflect the lowering of production of a coconut palm after continuous good agricultural practices.

The reasons for the present shortage of coconuts is because the entire Agricultural and Land policies of the present Government are at variance with any projection to increase Agricultural production and consolidation. —Why it is so I shall explain shortly.

The CCB has selected year 1968 as the base year to illustrate the extent of fertilizer used on coconut lands when 62,000 tons of coconut fertilizer were applied to coconut lands. The year 1968 was the third year of the UNP Government when the entire economy of the country was bouyant and expanding; long before the Land Reforms of the present Government was enunciated, which was in 1971 and the process of taking over of excess of land was started in 1973/74.

SINCE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT came into power the number of Boards to control the industry was multiplied not in the interest of the industry but to provide employment to its stooges, han-

gers-on and relatives of the political authorities etc. In pre-1970 days a coconut grower could address a letter to the CRI and get a reply in a matter of days as well as get something done positively—may it be selected seedlings, advice on soil conservation, advice on planting, advice on fertilizer, advice on insect-pests etc, whatever it may be it was available while the coconut grower was interested. Today there are so many organisations, no one knows where to go and with whom to confer. One never gets a reply to a letter—(I have three letters sent six months ago without even an acknowledgement yet).

The first cause is, that the administration is top heavy, too complicated and too many form-filling for the average coconut growers to comply with to get what he wants. Now he finds he has to wade through administrative jangles to get advice. Not worth on a few acres of coconut which is not sufficient to give him "an income to maintain himself."

Land Reform and the resulting reduction in acreage of a unit have been disastrous, and have virtually destroyed one leg of the tripod which supported the Foreign exchange earnings. The repercussions on our economy are far reaching. It has increased the rate of economic regressions and has driven many a worker closer to the poverty line than any other Government policy in recent history.

I agree Land Reform is necessary but should have been so designed to increase production and foreign exchange earnings rather than to concentrate on vote gathering. This was the motive of the Land Reformers. First they wanted to destroy the land owning class. Secondly reforms were directed to destroy the middle classes—in the coconut growing areas they formed a very formidable group in the socio-political arena. Reforms were brought about for political victimisation and vindictiveness and not for economic or social reasons. It is being used as an instrument of punishment to those who hold contrary political views.

Thirdly there are, today, more people living on coconut land than in the sample year of 1968. The increase is due to massive land segmentation of economically viable

Coconuts

units, under the Land Reforms, and settling the so-called "landless people" on 20 perches to 120 perches of once good coconut land.

The number so brought into the coconut lands is in the region of 10,000 souls. They cannot be considered as productive coconut growers but as potential voters to keep the present Government going. This process is going on daily where the present Government thinks its chances at the elections are poor.

THE LAND SO DISTRIBUTED has been reduced to the level of abandoned "village gardens". They were, before this kind of vandalism of productive land was perpetrated, the best coconut properties in the island. Every hour the SLBC "news in brief" announces the estates and the areas where the once productive lands are fragmented. The CCB cannot expect these new owners living on 15 to 60 coconut trees to apply fertilizers even if the fertilizer were to be delivered free to the hut. What the CCB should do is to undertake a survey of the extent of such fragmentation, even if it is going to expose the folly of the Minister of Agriculture to arrive at the root of the present "coconut crisis."

I have never seen, in my forty years of agricultural and land settlement experience such ill-conceived, unimaginative, economically disastrous settlement schemes. They have done no good either to the country or to the settler. Entire families who have been settled on these land shave taken to petty thieving for existence.

Fourthly, a man living by the land will put all his energy into the land only if he can get a reasonable living out of it. A quality of living before he was ever taken but the Land reform or any other reforms a Government may undertake, to pave the way for socialism or communism, whichever ism is in the mind of the present Government; we see it is happening in USSR, in China and in many an under-developed country. In all these reforms, may be political, may be social, may be economic, the first and the heaviest blow is taken by agriculture. It is a way of life that has given man independence and self-reliance. Therefore it is this bastion that must be attacked first, according to the

strategy of "isms." This impact has been so serious in agricultural production that we hear over the International Radio, China accusing USSR of heavy purchases of food grains in the world market and upsetting the food supply of the developing world.

At home we have arranged with China to get 200,000 tons of rice, another 60,000 tons of rice on a contract basis and 200,000 tons of wheat flour from USA under PL 480. When these figures are added up the Agricultural Minister's food production programme has collapsed. Of course it collapsed in 1970 when it launched its attack on the "Green Revolution of Late Dudley Senanayake's Government."

Before an agriculturist can go all out to increase production he must secure his own living. It is only then he will think of applying fertilizer and practices other forms of cultivation in his plot. This we have witnessed happening in millions of village gardens, so the present concept of development is not going to change this pattern but to continue the same type of village gardens under Land Reforms.

IN THE CASE of coconut small holdings—today all are small holders—the situation is more serious, with the value of the rupee dropping to about -/30 cts. and the rising cost of the basic items, applying fertilizer and improving his condition is completely out of the owner's mind. His own survival is more important to him than his coconut palm. So to him fertilizer is something he can forget for it takes 24 months to reap the benefits.

Cultivating a holding depends on how much the cultivator can spare, after meeting his personal demands on his income, to purchase his manure etc. Under present policies of "our Government" the CCB cannot expect a general increase of fertilizer use on coconut properties, even if the fertilizer were distributed free.

Fifthly, the CCB says that in 1968, 300,000 Acs. were fertilized and in 1976 only 140,000 Acs. have been fertilized. Question is what has happened to this 300,000 Acs. of 1968? They have not disappeared. The land is there but it has passed on to the Government under LRC. So why does not the Govern-

ment fertilize the lands taken over by it?

The answer is, the organisations that manage these lands are not interested in fertilizer. Their interest is to take as much as possible while the going is good. The political Authority is not a planter, he is a grabber, so the grabbing is going on all around and when accounting comes the new management finds there is no money to buy fertilizer and the matter is forgotten.

According to the claims of the LRC about 450,000 Acs. of coconut land have been vested in the LRC. According to these figures it can be surmised that these 450,000 Acs. are not fertilized. The 140,000 Acs. that has received fertilizer in 1976 consist mostly of the Statutory 50 Acs. (left with the old owners) and the inter-family transfers and some of the small holdings that did not come under the Land Reforms. It has now become the responsibility of the owners of these 140,000 Acs. to keep the export market going, though according to the Agricultural Census of 1971 there are about 110,000 acres under coconut cultivation of which 80% are classed as small holdings.

The Agricultural Ministry has so far failed to formulate policy to consolidate the 80% of 1,100,000 Acs. of coconut land. It is more concerned with destroying the industry for political gains than to improve the industry for the benefit of the people.

Sixthly, It is true that the cost of coconut fertilizer has gone up from Rs. 250/- per ton in 1968 to Rs. 625/- per ton in 1976; two and half times the 1968 price. But on the other hand, coconut products have gone up from 3 to 4 times today. It will be more if the prices are not doctored by yet another Board—Coconut Marketing Board. If the market were to be free the prices would be higher than what they are today. The price is controlled to syphon out a part of the profits to Government by selling in the world markets at a higher price and also to keep the local consumption price of fresh nuts and coconut oil low as it affects the living index.

The higher price of fertilizer has nothing to do with the drop in the use of fertilizer. It is a ques-

tion of feeding the owner or the coconut palm. The income must be adequate to return a part of it to the land. If the size of holdings is economically viable and adequate to maintain the owner and his family in a reasonable standard, the CCB could expect the owner to manure their property. These are normal human aspirations and cannot be reformed or replaced by legislations or any isms. Success of a Government is in its principles, and legislations to give full opportunities to man to achieve his aspirations.

I repeat again Land Reforms do not mean only fragmentation and redistribution. Priority must be given to consolidation to create economically viable units, so that, production can be increased and the economic life of the people can improve. In that situation, the price of Fertilizer is not so important. Policies and principles of a Government to enthuse the people into action is important. It is the ineffectual policies of a Government and the insecurity they generate in the minds of the people that has spelled disaster to the coconut industry.

(To be Continued)

LIFE IN A TEA ESTATE—19

The Head Kangany

By Ina Trimmer

THE MOST COLOURFUL PERSONALITY of an estate labour force was the Head Kangany. In the days when all estate labour came with a "Tin Trunk" mentality, recruited either in India or (less frequently) locally and brought to an estate.

India, always referred to as 'The Coast', was no more than a name. But they must go. And with their passing the Head Kangany disappears. There are only a handful still left of these one time stalwarts of the planting world, who, like the centurion of old could have said—"I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers; and I say to this, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh! And to my servant, Do this and he doeth it."

A common sight on any up-country railway station platform in the 'good' days was a head kan-

gany shepherding his flock lately arrived from India or on the way to a holiday on the 'Coast'. Men, women and babies come to seek a new life, with better prospects, facing new horizons in another land which to those who had left the arid waters of Southern India would seem flowing with milk and honey.

All their worldly wealth they carried with them; a few finely woven mats to sleep on; a few brass pots for cooking and water; and perhaps a change of clothing. If the family had a little money it was invested in the jewellery their women wore. Seldom was it pure gold, but silver, gold-plated—"dipped" as they called it, in 'gold water'. The nose studs, heavy gold bracelets and anklets, the rings on their toes were attractive. Clusters of large circular earrings showed a hanging look which was all that was left of the lobe.

Autres temps, autres mœurs! New times bring new ways. Soon the Indian labourer will be no more. In hundreds and thousands they are going. A few will be left, the few who have become Ceylon nationals, and they with all other labour will in future be in direct estate account instead of being members of the Head Kangany's gang.

When we lived on Brae each estate had its several Head Kanganies, and Brae was no exception. A head kangany was usually a wealthy man. He drew besides his pay, a certain sum of money for each labourer of his gang who did a day's work. "Head Money" alone sometimes amounted to Rs. 500 a month and over, depending on the strength of his gang.

He had other prerequisites as well—wedding contracts, firewood contracts, and many others. Often he ran a *kadde* where the labour force bought its requirements. The labourer can buy his rice at the estate store, but all other commodities must be procured elsewhere. The estate *kadde* supplies all his needs. Onions, potatoes, dhal (a favourite vegetable curry) dry fish, sugar, coconuts, tobacco (both men and women smoke and chew tobacco) all these are stocked in the little line room of 12 feet x 10 feet which is the general store of the estate. There's salmon too. When a labourer really makes a splash and sits down to a banquet fit for a

king, he opens a tin of cheap salmon or pilchard. Many a time I have seen a dozen empty tins lying by a "cooly" lines after a wedding or festival.

A head kangany goes out with his men to the field. He directs all operations together with his sub-kanganies. He can often be distinguished by his head gear, a 'thalappay' several yards of white cloth wound round his head turban fashion, with one end hanging behind. There is always an air of authority about him, due perhaps to controlling labour and being the leader of a gang, but most of all, I think because he is a moneyed man, often the richest on the estate. Many are the kanganies who buy large estates, and, what is more, run them as efficiently and far more economically than anyone else.

MURUGAYA was the head kangany of Brae Division. He was my husband's trusted and faithful retainer who had followed him with his gang of coolies to each estate where my husband was employed. He was a man of few words, stolid with a poker face that never showed any emotion. I never saw Murugaya either joyful or troubled. Just as an idol's face reflects none of the mutability of human destiny. Murugaya's registered no feeling.

He was three times married and all three wives were alive. Two lived with him in the lines, Cheeneamma (Sugar Lady) the latest acquisition, the mother of his only child, a little girl of seven years, and Mariai, a woman with money in her own right, a financier of the first order who with my husband's advice dabbled in shares, had hunches that came off, and had her own bank account.

But Murugaya had a 'labourer's' mentality. All his wealth was in a tin trunk left under his bed and chained to a cupboard. He would never touch a cent of it once the money went in. Rather he would borrow than dip into his store. Whenever he needed extra cash, or there was a sudden demand, he came to my husband for an advance, his little daughter, the apple of his eye, toddling beside him.

"What Murugaya! Do you mean to tell me you haven't a hundred rupees to advance to your men?"

"No, Aiyah (your honour)" he replies in his flat voice. "How can I have so much money?"

Head Kangany

"Poi! Poi!" (lies, lies!) a little voice chimes in with high-pitched haste. "Don't you believe him, aiyah. Appa has money. He has a box under his bed and it is full of notes. I saw with my own eyes when he opened it. He can hardly close it, Aiyah. It is so full. Appa has a lot of money in his box."

"Chut! You ketta pulle" (bad child) Don't tell lies to Aiyah. What will he think of me!" And Murugaya would give his little daughter a love tap on her head. But Murugaya could have easily laid his hands on several thousand rupees in cash any day and not have found himself centless.

A HEAD KANGANY'S WIFE went out to work just as her sister in the gang did. It was not a case of Judy O'Grady and the Colonel's Lady being sisters under the skin only. In this instance there was often no difference whatsoever. They lived in the same lines and all lived free of rent and they did the same kind of work. Every morning the wife of the Head Kangany woke up like all the other women with the tappoo, finished her chores in the home, took up her cumble and wore it like a great brown hood, picked up her basket in which she collected her leaf and was at the muster ground at seven o'clock to be given her 'name', i.e. allotted her task for the day. She too, did her part, in earning the monthly income.

Cheeneamma (Sugar Lady) however was the only one of Murugaya Kangany's wives who worked in the field. Marijai was middle-aged and corpulent, and had probably never done a day's work in her life. As a woman of money and the head kangany's wife, she thought it was beneath her dignity to go out into the field. She kept a little boy and girl, children of poor relations, to attend on her. I often saw her standing outside the lines, always well dressed, surveying the scene with a portly air, very much the wife of the leader, in fact, a leader herself.

But Sugar Lady was a bouncing young woman who found her stolid middle-aged husband a dull companion. She was Murugaya's niece, his sister's only daughter. This is not considered an incestuous marriage by many Hindu Tamils. On the contrary it is an ideal one, greatly sought after by them because they do not regard such a relationship as a blood tie. The children of two brothers

or two sister, yes. If Sugar Lady had been Murugaya's brother's daughter, marriage with her was not possible. The bond would have been there, the family bond. But a sister and brother are as far apart as any stranger.

CHEENEEAMMA thought she was the 'goods'. She had all the traditional charms of a Tamil beauty; a buxom body bursting with youth and health, a bright saucy face but her hair was no better than any other labourer's bundled as it was into an untidy, uncombed knot high at the back of her head. Her greatest asset was that she had presented her husband, childless for many years, with a daughter. I have seen her toss her head and jingle her bracelets and anklets as she passed by, sometimes flashing me a smile which she more usually used on the young bloods with devastating effect.

A Head kangany's living expenses were as few as a labourer's. He lived in the lines just as a labourer did, rent free. He ate the same type of food. Perhaps he had tinned salmon a little more frequently. All medicines and medical attention were free. His children shared in the free mid-day meal that was given to all children of the labourers, and at Brae every baby who required it, was given milk food free till weaning time. It was therefore, not surprising that he was able to save quite a bit, particularly if he was a non-drinker like Murugaya.

KITNUN, Murugaya's brother-in-law, head kangany of Maragalla division was the exact antithesis of his sister Marijai. Whereas Marijai was a great big chunk of a woman, a careful hoarder and a wizard with money, her brother Kitnun was a weedy, devil-may-care gay Lothario who believed in wine, women and song. He had a perennial redness in his eye and a way of stroking his walrus moustache as if he was for ever wiping toddy froth. His family was always on the increase and with never-failing regularity there was an addition every year.

Once at a name-giving celebration when the fun was at its height he decided to put forward the claims of one of his light-o' loves. Fortified with half a bottle of arrack he broached the subject.

With a preliminary loud clearing of the throat he began—

"I have something to tell you all."

His mother, a shrew old dame who had made a pile by selling roasted kadalay (gram) on pay days to the labourers (she had Rs. 900 in the Post Office Savings Bank, collected, as my husband put it in cents) knew her son only too well.

"What have you to say?" she asked belligerently.

"Ah-h-hem! I propose to bring Chellum to live here."

"What did you say? Have I heard all right?"

Kitnun quailed visibly.

There was silence in the room and the whole gathering was tense with anticipation.

He decided to brave it out.

"I intend to bring Chellum to live here."

The old lady leapt to her feet agile and wiry as a mustang.

"Chut; To think that a son of mine should talk thus with a wife and seven children to bless his home, Chut!"

Swift as a lash it came, a slap that made Kitnun stagger and retire to nurse a wounded cheek and feelings!

IRRELLEPEN of the Lauragalla Division was the prototype of a prosperous head kangany. He wore large gypsy earrings of pure gold, several heavy gold rings, a gold bracket as well as a thick gold chain, round his neck. He carried on his person, even to the field, at least Rs. 500 worth of gold. I did not like his insolent bearing, but my husband said his efficiency was unquestionable. He could have bought Brae twice over.

Of them all I liked old Muniandy best. He lorded it over the furthest division. His cock-eye under a heavy thatch of greying hair, a kindly twisted smile, a slight deprecation in his manner made him rather a lovable character. I do not think he had much money. His greater failing was his weakness for the arrack tavern on the Rattota road but he was devoted to his wife Marie amma and his twin girls.

When the babies were to be born and, as Moses, the Assistant Clerk, put it—"Mrs. Muniandy was about to be brought to book 'Muniandy accompanied his wife to the "coast" to her father's house for her confinement.

A month later my husband received a post card—

"Honoured Sir,

By the grace of God and the help of your honour my wife has given birth to twins."

MAHAVELI

Diversion And Results

By R. Kahawita

AT THE TIME OF WRITING, i.e. Feb. 15th, Mahaveli has gone dry again—second time after the diversion works were completed. Dry weather presently experienced all over the Island is normal for February and March. This is the harvesting season in our crop cycle. In a normal year the dry zone cultivators can do without much irrigation water during this period as the crops have matured by now. However, this year the rains have been late and irregular, cultivations have been late, no one has paid attention to the cropping cycle, so many are caught in the vagaries of our weather cycle. **Not sufficient water to mature the standing crops.**

There is no flow in Mahaveli at the moment and whatever trickles down is diverted at Polgolla to alleviate the long suffering villages of the NCP. This is being done at the expense of the cultivators lower down. The heaviest casualty is Minipe scheme, which is experiencing very serious water trouble since the scheme was restored in 1936 by D. S. Senanayake. Up to the time of Polgolla diversion, this scheme enjoyed two and three crops a year. This is the first time there is a serious water shortage. The situation there is so bad, I am informed, that the Prime Minister had to apologise to the Minipe farmers for the water shortage when she was in the area to re-name Hasalaka.

Lower down there is Allai Scheme which too depends on Mahaveli water. There too the trouble may be water shortage to mature the standing crop because storage at Allai was done away with when priority to storage higher up was considered.

Since Stage I of the Mahaveli Scheme was implemented our rain fall pattern has demonstrated the urgency of storage and the priority that must be given for storage in our River Valley Development projects. With this experience before us, we still hear the Minister for Irrigation promising the country more and more

diversion schemes. In fact the Hon. Minister at various times and at various political meetings has named all the sizeable rivers in Sri Lanka as being diverted for the benefit of the people. Of course, this is politics and the Hon. Minister cannot be blamed for it. His survival is as important to him as the survival of the people whom he has pledged to serve.

THE EXPERIENCE we have had since diversion of Mahaveli is sufficient evidence to review our priorities in the Development of Mahaveli Basin. In a series of articles earlier I had given reasons why we got mixed up in our priorities and the present situation confirms what was asserted in those articles. In short, if we are to develop our rivers for the benefit of cultivation we cannot do without storage. Storage must precede diversion. The situations created in the NCP and below the diversion justifies the original priorities which were severed in the earlier articles.

To make diversion effective and productive to the farmer, storage at Moragahakande must be implemented immediately. It does not matter two hoots whose name plate should memorialise this scheme cultivators require an assured supply of water; Moragahakande will ensure that. The solution to the problem is storage at Moragahakande so that the floods of Mahaveli could be stored for use later on. At the same time steps must be taken to prevent excessive—what the irrigation Engineer calls—conveyance losses. In a system of transbasin distribution these losses may amount to even 40% of the diverted water by the time this "precious liquid" reaches the cultivator. So the 2500 cubic feet of water per second drawn at Polgolla may be just a 1000 cubic feet per second by the time it reaches a cultivator at Kalawewa. The area cultivable from the diversion water depends on the latter figure and not the former. This water is expensive today so the immediate priority should be to conserve the diverted water by minimising losses. Answer to this is not more diversion. The objective is not to increase the number of name plates but conserve the precious water. If man and money are available immediate action must be taken to prevent losses in conveyance.

WHEN ONE SEES the neglect of schemes already constructed, one begins to think; what is more prudent? To construct new schemes to compensate for losses or improve the existing schemes and take purposeful steps to conserve the water already available. In our hurry to count the new projects a government has constructed during its period of stewardship, the works already functioning are neglected and allowed to decay, while new schemes are being inaugurated. For example there is no reason why Samanala-wewa should be implemented while lower down, Uda Walawe has been virtually abandoned and the water wasted to develop power only.

There are some 65,000 Acs. awaiting to be developed in this basin, out of which only a couple of thousand acres have been rendered productive. Here again the Prime Minister had to make some caustic remarks on the progress of Uda Walawe when she attended a "Mass Rally" at Monoragala. It is high time our politicians think of working in the national interest and forget self interest in their public life.

Recently I have seen some of the old irrigation schemes where the state of neglect is shocking. It looked as if the Department has abandoned these irrigation projects and is concentrating on roads and bridges which can be seen "comfortably" while travelling in a car. Maintenance is more important than construction; unless a scheme is maintained to the designed standards, it will not function as expected. It results in water losses, wastage, water shortages and crop failures. When we experience this, we do not get to the root of the problem but think of additional works to compensate for the losses and mismanagement of water. Another example of "Parkinson Law."

Operation of Mahaveli diversion has demonstrated the urgency of storage in Nalanda Oya and the Government should take immediate action to construct Moragahakanda which can be developed to store the bulk of the flood waters of Mahaveli and allow the normal flow to Minipe scheme and schemes lower down.

SHORT STORY

The Harvest

Dawn was just breaking in the sky. The birds had started their daily chorus. The Chanticleer was announcing with gusto the arrival of a new day. The man in the bed was just stirring. As he became fully conscious, his mind was filled with great joy—he knew that something good was in store for him that day. He yawned loudly and stretched—Oh! it was good to be alive. Soon, he rose and went towards the well for a wash. After singing his devotional songs with great reverence, he went towards the house where his wife welcomed him with a streaming tumblerful of coffee. The man sat down with a satisfied sigh. "Ah! Pakiam, the day has dawned at last! Murugan has indeed been good to me this year and now at last I can taste the fruits that effort and good luck have made possible. There hasn't been a harvest like this one for many years now. What with the drought and all the other odds that were against us. But this year it is different. We can at last accomplish so many of the things that we have wanted to for so long. We may even be able to finish Sundari's marriage! And effect the repairs to our house and..." he stopped in midsentence when he saw the look on his wife's face.

"Oh! I know, I know what you are going to say, but don't say it. It is not as though I am counting my chickens before they've hatched—the harvest has all been reaped and stacked, it is only the threshing that has to be done. Don't be overly superstitious Pakiam! Ah well, I'd better get ready to go to the fields."

A little while later, bathed, breakfasted, and meticulously attired in a spotless verti and angavastiram, Ponnambalam set forth on his mission. He was a tall distinguished looking man, greying slightly at the temples, which gave him just that little bit more of added distinction. He twisted once again his well-waxed moustache as he stepped briskly onto the road, umbrella in hand, full of joie de vivre. He nodded or exchanged a word with many along the way, as he was well known, being one of the biggest landlords of the village. His fathers before him commanded as much or even more respect than he: and for generations

they had wielded a great deal of power in the surrounding area. Their house was one of the largest in the vicinity. Ponnambalam was well liked in those parts as he was kind and generous to a fault and never exerted his authority unnecessarily though he was a leading member of the Village Council.

It was a fair distance to his paddy field, and the sun was pretty hot even at that hour—but Ponnambalam did not feel the heat nor the dust for there was happiness in his heart and a spring in his step—in anticipation of things to come. He soon approached the fields and made his way towards the place where his harvest was stacked, when a man came running towards him shouting "Aiya, Aiya! you will never believe what a calamity has happened! Oh God! that such an unheard of thing should happen in our village! I couldn't believe my very eyes when I came here a while ago with all the men and equipment ready for the threshing."

And so, Ponnambalam, his tranquility and sense of well being slightly shaken, hurried ahead to see what all this was about.

It was indeed a very different man who walked along the very same road a few hours later. The proud head bent and downcast, the springy step slow and faltering, his whole being a picture of sadness and disillusionment. As he slowly dragged his feet home, hardly looking up, he wondered how on earth he would tell his wife and children all that had happened. How was he to tell them that all his hopes had been shattered, all his plans wrecked. He was also hurt that such a thing should happen to him. It was not as though he had harmed anyone in his life.

Never had he been cruel or exploited anyone. Then, why Oh! Why! this punishment? But fate never seems to choose its victims in that manner. It always seems to pick on the good people.

How could he ever forget the sight which met his eyes as he went to the place where his harvest had been. But it was unbelievable! Where there had been stacks and stacks of paddy stalks, there was only hay left.

"Oh Aiya, who would do such a daring thing! Certainly not someone from our village. It must have been somebody from outside. But how cleverly they have done it and carried everything away, possibly in the dead of night."

By this time quite a crowd had gathered to witness this inconceivable spectacle. But what had happened had happened and there was very little anyone could do about it. Recovering the grain would be next to impossible, and it was not as though informing the police would help much—he had witnessed the extent of their efficiency on one or two previous occasions. Robbing the grain would not have been such a difficult task to accomplish, as hardly anyone lived near the paddy fields and posting a watch was not customary in those parts. So it was, that the thieves had had a field day.

Thus, Ponnambalam, his hopes and dreams in pieces, his happiness destroyed, started back on his dismal journey home, with dropping spirits and flagging steps.

As he walked along, a man caught him up from behind saying: "I have just heard of what happened, I am indeed sorry that such a thing should happen to you of all people! No doubt thievery is increasing in our country day by day, but to think of it happening

Sri Lanka: Exporter Par Excellence

We started by exporting Gems, Tea and Spice;
Now the only thing we don't export is rice.
Of course we're being exhorted to firmly compete
With all those backward lands effete,
Who sell exotic birds and fruits and orchids
To Western lands where beasts outnumber kids.
Yet, should we not provide for our own kith and kin.
Before we barter flesh and bone and skin
For "Foreign Exchange" in whose fair name
So many crimes are committed to our shame.
Where have all the green leaves gone?
And where the tender golden fruits newborn?
All gone by Air, exported for the pelf
From foreign lands, to swell the purse
Of the selfless patriotic self!

Jegatheswari Nagendran

right here in our village is unimaginable! But Ponna, do you know what has led people to behave in this manner? It is the defect in this whole system. Unless it changes completely, no good can come to our land. Over population, under-production, unemployment, exploitation—there is no end to the list of ills. Only when the revolution comes can all this change. Can you imagine living in a land where there will be enough to eat for all, no unemployment, no housing problems, no more nepotism or corruption—no, no, all that will have to end. No doubt the revolution has to come about soon and it is people like you and I who have to help in the process. We have to bring awareness to the masses so that the dictatorship of the proletariat can be achieved. There is simply no other way out. Look at the shortages, the soaring prices it is as Marx said, only when..."

So the voice of Cumaraswamy, master at the local school, and a zealous follower of the Marxian doctrine went on and on, elaborating on his pet theme. He never failed to expound his theories when the least opportunity presented itself. But Ponnambalam was in no mood today to listen to his friend though he felt that there was some truth at least in what he said. His problem was immediate and how would the revolution, if and when it came, help him in this? Bespectacled and bearded, the fiery young revolutionary, Das Kapital in hand, could go on theorising, but what did it all matter to Ponnambalam?

A few years later, we see a man driving one of the latest limousines—a man of the world, a prosperous man, a man who has some standing in society, a man whose whole bearing spelt out his position, one who enjoys the good things of life. He alights at one of the five star hotels and enters the newly opened night club which is called the "Paddy Sheaf". The man's memory chords are stirred—but he felt not an atom of remorse or shame, for he smiled to himself—the smile of a man who had come very far from feeling ashamed for what he considered trifles. Unscrupulousness, improbity, opportunism, cunning—these are the things that make one 'somebody' in life, not idealism and honesty—that was for the fools of this world the dreamy, philosophic, high min-

ded, fastidious fools. He had left all that behind. He was no longer a fool. He knew how to live. Yet, he couldn't deny that paddy sheaves had played a very important part in his life, for the turning point came with them. "Hello, Cumar, We were hoping that you would come this evening. Come and join us for a drink" greeted some of his friends, people like him, who lived on their wits and other people's money, parasites who preyed on society and gave nothing in return, the newest elite who had merely replaced the old. So, the fiery young revolutionary of yesterday sat down to savour what the evening had to offer.

Vinodini

FOREIGN REPORTS

From UK and Middle East On Matters of Significance

● TEA AND COFFEE

London, (AFP)

While all eyes have been on the price explosion in coffee, which has multiplied eightfold since July 1975, there has at the same time been an almost equally dramatic rise to record levels in the cost of its rival beverage tea. At this week's London tea auctions, held on February 28, price increased, "Across the Board" by between 20 and 30 pence a kilo (as much as 25 per cent) following the exceptional strong general demand for the Indian, Ceylonese, and African supplies on offer. These rises were unprecedented, the trade said, but brokers are still forecasting further gains. The average price this week was expected to be around 150 pence a kilo, compared with 126 pence last week, and just 65 pence at the same time last year.

At the moment, the "Tail-End" or residue of the 1976/77 Indian crop is being sold, usually a little lower in quality. The "New Crop" tea from this major producer is expected in July or August and is always traded at a premium over existing market levels, brokers pointed out. The best-quality Indian tea actually fetched 171 pence a kilo on February 28—the top price paid—which compares with last week's peak of 160 pence for a Sri Lanka variety.

There was a complete clearance of the 55,833 packages (about 55 kilos each) on offer, and there are similar offerings expected in the next few weeks. Last year at this time, during the supply shortages experienced in Sri Lanka, offerings were in the region of 40,000 packages.

In addition to the continuing scarcity of tea, which stems mainly from Sri Lanka, the London market has been "catching up" on the prices being paid in overseas markets. The soaring price of coffee (which touched a record 4,000 pounds a metric ton last week) must change some people's drinking habits, it is claimed, to the benefit of tea (average price about 1,500 pounds a ton).

But whereas raw (green) coffee may be stored in warehouse for up to five years and the roasted article kept in air-tight containers by housewives for many months, the quality of tea deteriorates quickly with storage and speed of delivery is of the essence. The trade expect that after auction, there will be only a six-week delay before the tea (packaged, graded and blended) reaches the retail outlets. Meanwhile stocks in Britain are building up with 68,000 tons held in warehouse last week, compared with 62,000 tons a year ago. In addition there is an estimated 14,000 tons "Afloat" en route to Britain.

Coinciding with these soaring prices, international discussions were satisfactorily concluded in London last week on the possibility of establishing an international tea agreement between the main producers and consumers, with its prime objective being to stabilise prices. The conference, organised by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), is believed to have agreed on certain basic objectives. A decision as to whether a full negotiating conference will be held in Geneva this autumn will be announced by the FAO in due course.

—AFP

● OIL PRICES

SHEIKH AHMED ZAKI YAMANI the Saudi Oil Minister, said in Abu Dhabi yesterday that efforts to heal the split in OPEC have so far failed. The split, which occurred at last December's meeting in Qatar, was caused by the decision of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emi-

Future Of SLFP?

rates to stick to a 5 per cent oil price rise against the 10 per cent adopted by the other 11 OPEC members.

"We regret that our colleagues in OPEC have not altered their position and we on our part have no intention whatsoever of increasing the price of our oil," he said on arrival for talks with UAE officials. But he said that Saudi Arabia would not oppose the holding of a special OPEC conference to try to resolve the oil price dispute, but it would have to be well prepared.

Sheikh Yamani said that Saudi Arabia was going ahead with plans to increase its oil production to meet world market demand, but this did not mean that it planned to flood the market with cheap oil.

Meanwhile, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reports that Saudi oil production in January was about 1m. barrels per day lower than the level projected for the month, following the Qatar meeting. Daily production averaged 8.2m. b/d. The drop was caused by bad weather which reduced loading time at the Ras Tanura terminal by as much as 60 per cent.

After the Qatar meeting, Saudi Arabia lifted its 8.5m. b/d ceiling on production and envisaged achieving an average daily production rate of 10m. b/d during the first quarter of the year.

The principal beneficiary of the Saudi production shortfall has been Iran whose production reached averages of 5.1m. b/d towards the end of January—considerably more than was anticipated earlier in the month when output was running at less than 4.5m b/d. The reason for the increased output, which comes despite the higher price of Iranian crude, appears to be that some tankers switched from Ras Tanura to Iran's Kharg Island terminal, which is more sheltered.

Yesterday, Dr. Parviz Mina, the vice-chairman of the National Iranian Oil Company, said Iran would increase the price of its crude by a further 5 per cent, in July. He refuted unofficial reports that Iran has given a discount to its oil buyers and claimed that Iran was maintaining its post-Qatar price increase of an average of 10.4 per cent, on its crude.

MEES quotes the Energy Report from the Chase Manhattan Bank

as saying that Aramco, the dominant Saudi oil producer, will have the capacity to produce 11m. b/d by the middle of this year and 11.8 m. b/d by the end of the year.

James Buxton

From Financial Times

REVIEW

Can The PM Salvage The SLFP ?

By Jayantha Somasundaram

February 25,

The political crisis that has now emerged is one that has been festering for a considerable period. Its appreciation requires an acquaintance with the realities of political power in this country.

Sri Lanka has been, and probably still continues to be, a traditional feudal country, where the majority of the people live in the country and have their ideas and aspirations determined by this rural background. The UNP, in its embryonic stage as the National Congress, is a party that has built itself meticulously over the greater part of this country, being led by the traditional Sinhala rural aristocracy. Electorally it is this the most significant party.

Nevertheless it has been defeated, and defeated badly, but only in elections where there has been an anti-UNP front. In 1956, July 1960 and 1970 the SLFP, LSSP and CP have defeated the UNP by being united in their opposition to it.

Now that this unity has been shattered the parliamentary prospects of the UNP brighten considerably. Many acts of omission, more than commission, on the part of the Government since 1970, have also served to strengthen the UNP. In addition the presence of the Emergency throughout much of this Government's term of office has gone to confuse the extent of opposition to it.

On the other hand, the Government's record is not unimpressive. On the contrary, no Government has effected many reforms and contributed to social and economic change as Mrs. Bandaranaike's. Much of the beneficial effects of

these reforms were obliterated though by the ravages of international economic happenings and mucked up by the bureaucracy.

The electoral reality on the other hand is not so much the events of the last six years but rather the events of the last six weeks. The defection of the SLFP MPs, the breakaway of the CP—these are the events that will go furthest to strain the credibility of the Government. It remains to be seen to what extent Mrs. Bandaranaike can salvage the image of the SLFP in the face of these and any future defections.

—SAMC Feature.

LETTER

Snake Bite

Sir,

The secret formula of the Red Indians of Brazil for the production of an unfallible cure for snake-bite is with Revd Fr. Cyril Edirisinghe PARISH PRIEST MATARA.

Once this stone is applied to the wound no other medicines, externally or internally is required.

The ingredients needed for the manufacture of this Snake-stone, (so well known in Sri Lanka and India and some Western Countries as the EDIRISINGHE SNAKE-STONE) the medicinal herbal plants are all available in Sri Lanka and in India too.

Since the Governments of Sri Lanka and India are to begin a joint venture to conduct extensive research into the ayurvedic system of medicine, its future development and production of herbal medicines, it would be well-worth getting in touch with Revd. Fr. CYRIL EDIRISINGHE, PARISH PRIEST, MATARA to obtain this secret formula for the cure of snake-bites, which this priest was fortunate enough to obtain from the Red Indian Tribe in Brazil.

As in the case of the Ven. Obbega Devananda Thero of Mone-ragala, this Catholic Priest, too, is prepared to offer his services to the Research Centre, if he is invited to do so, by the authorities, in the interests of Medical Science and humanity.

Julian Senanayake

14/4, Piyaratnarama Place,
Dehiwala.
12.2.1977

Confidentially

Livestock And Poonac

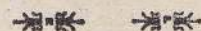
IS IT NOT A RIB-TICKLING JOKE that the National Livestock Board (NLB) should have run a series of large-sized advertisements in the Lake House papers—they cost a fortune nowadays—offering to buy “exotic” and pedigreed cattle from owners wanting to sell them? That one would have thought that the National Livestock Board would encourage dairy owners to increase and improve their stocks without buying the best cattle from them for its own herds in the different LRC estates the NLB is now running? That a casual and cursory investigation revealed that these advertisements had been prompted by the fact that a large number of imported animals (under the World Bank-aided dairy development project and cows imported and gifted from countries like Australia, New Zealand and Denmark) and the progeny from these animals were being sold in increasing numbers at scandalously low give-away prices? That the only reason for such sales was the inability of farmers to feed them? That when the NLB discovered—a little late in the day—that these animals were being bought by the butchers, the NLB fell back on these advertisements to make a public show that it was doing what it could to save the nation's high quality cattle from the butcher? That the question now arises as to why the dairy owners and farmers want to sell these animals? That the answer is a simple one: that there is a feed crisis? That there was such a crisis in 1973/74 and that it has repeated itself on an even larger scale in 1976/77? That whilst both these crises can be attributed to persistent droughts knowledgeable circles are aware that the main difficulty has arisen because of the total and complete shortage of coconut poonac? That the shortage of coconut poonac is not something that has arisen overnight? That the terrible shortage of poonac was known to the authorities as far back June 1976? That the Prime Minister herself had summoned a meeting of those concerned on July 1, 1976? That in consequence of this preliminary meeting, there were top

level meetings in the Ministry of Agriculture on July 6, 1976 and the Ministry of Planning on July 9, 1976? That it is learnt that as a result of these meetings the Cabinet had decided to approve the import of coconut poonac up to 20,000 tons and free exchange had been released for this purpose? That from that time onwards attempts had been made to import poonac from different countries but none was available on the world market? That in the meantime the amount of poonac that has to be imported has been pushed up to 70,000 tons?

IS IT NOT A FACT that the Philippines had agreed to ship some of the poonac required by Sri Lanka? That it is also believed that a small consignment has been received in Colombo? That dairy owners and others are anxious to know whether this Philippines poonac has the basic minima of protein content and other nutrients? That there are wild rumours that the poonac from the Philippines is sub-standard? That this may be a baseless and malicious lie spread by interested parties but unless the Government or the Coconut Authority publishes the full facts such rumours are bound to snowball? That rumours also persist that an attempt has been made to import compound feed from India but that India was unable to supply anything near what we need urgently? That it is whispered in VIP circles that the immediate need is in the region of 10,000 tons? That the shortage of poonac has been known for nine months now and the present indications are that the position will become worse? That complaints have been heard that numerous suggestions to find substitutes have not been acted upon? That among other things, the export of gingelly seed should have been banned so that gingelly poonac would have become available on the local market? That a number of other substitutes could have been produced if concerted action coupled with incentive prices had been taken? That to make matters worse a sudden and unexpected drought has set in? That the cattle feed crisis has been accentuated because for twenty five years—in spite of excellent research about pasture and fodder together with a plethora of reports by experts on cattle food—nothing has been done at farmers' level to implement recommenda-

tions? That even safety measures like growing fodder and crops suitable in small plots with even well water and conserving then by sun-drying or preparing silage have not been taken? That what is unfortunate is that after the 1973/74 debacle, when hundreds of small farmers (dairy) had closed down and the Milk Board collections had dropped by 50%, there was no well thought out plan of action to prevent a repetition?

IS IT NOT TRUE that a dairy farmer can break even on the present guaranteed price of milk if the poonac did not go beyond Rs. 900 a ton? That today the price of poonac has topped the Rs. 2000 a ton limit and there is not the slightest doubt that it will move still further up? That in situation—with no substitutes available—it is difficult for any dairy farmer to survive? That this poonac crisis only shows the total failure of certain governmental policies? That, in the mad and irrational quest for foreign exchange, coconut poonac had been exported at a time when the shortage had arisen? That for the sake of foreign exchange (with CRA and tax holidays) many other commodities vitally needed for our economy has begun? and is being exported? That the shortages created by such exports have now compelled the Government to import commodities at high prices (expending foreign exchange) to meet the shortages created by these exports? That the case of poonac is a classic example? That even today gingelly seeds are being exported making edible oils and poonac extremely scarce and costly in Sri Lanka? That the foreign exchange earned there by does not compensate for the higher prices for gingelly oil and the depletion of the stocks of poonac for our livestock? That we are exporting prawns and we are thereafter compelled to import canned fish because of the enormous scarcity of sea food? That Sri Lanka has become a veritably crazy land where preventable maladies are proliferated by self-defeating and contradictory policies? That if the official media stopped its [Alice-in-Wonderland fables about foreign exchange by our new and nontraditional exports, there will be less resentment among people about the essentials (locally produced) that are no longer available to them because of exports?



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