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by

M. Vytilingam, B. A. (Lond)
formerly Principal Hindu College, Chavakachcheri

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Letter From The Editor

THE YOUNG LADIES on our cover this week are washing dirty linen. It is a necessary and unavoidable exercise. Personal cleanliness is not possible without washing one's dirty linen regularly. This kind of washing dirty linen is a private and intimate matter whether one does it oneself or hires a dhoby or laundry to do the job. But there is another kind of dirty linen that is washed in the metaphorical sense, and this is usually in respect of matters of vital public interest. Power corrupts, and the hearts, minds and hands of those who wield power at every level tends to become dirty not only with the bureaucratic abuse of power but also with nepotism, bribery, and worse. The bringing into the limelight the dark deeds of bureaucrats, politicians and other minions who exercise power with a view to cleansing public life is metaphorically termed washing the dirty linen of the nation. An alert and vigilant press often sets the ball rolling as in the Watergate scandal in the USA which brought the mighty President Nixon and other important politicians and bureaucrats down. How far Watergate has purged American politics of dirt, corruption and the abuse of power is problematic, but there is no doubt that no important politician likes to risk a Watergate. Though the press in the USA had made the Watergate Inquiry by a Senate Committee an inevitable consequence of the Nixon dirty linen, the big national dailies in Sri Lanka have never so far launched investigative exposures which would make a major Commission necessary to investigate some persons who exercise supreme power. But during the seven years of SLFP-UF rule, there had grown up a volume of public dissatisfaction against the gross abuse of power and corruption indulged in by that Government and those associated with it. (In more recent times the established Left leaders have expressed regret for having joined the SLFP to sustain it in parliamentary power—the most recent being a statement by T. B. Subasinghe who had even become a member of the SLFP in his enthusiasm for united front strategies. When *Tribune* had criticised the Left Parties at that time for surrendering their basic principles to the adventurist, opportunist and demagogic policies of the Bandaranaiques, *Tribune* was denounced by the Left Parties as "reactionary" standing in the way of progressivism and radicalism—whatever those terms might mean or connote. But today, everything we had anticipated as a result of the Left Parties falling behind the SLFP has come to pass. We do not want to indulge in we-told-you-so breast-beating, but the recent sack-clothes-and-ashes lamentations of important Left leaders brings us comfort that we had not been so wrong after all). The Presidential Commission which began its sitting on August 1 will be one of the biggest dirty linen washing operations in this country. The prosecuting counsel, A. C. (Bunty) de Soysa, in his opening address, (which is still not over at the time of writing these notes), has spotlighted some of the matters the Commission will be called upon to investigate. The fullest publicity to matters he has referred has been given in the daily press and over the SLBC and there is really no need to refer to them at this juncture. To many, some of the revelations may seem exaggerations with a touch of vindictive political flamboyance, but to those who lived through the seven years aware of the many acts of commission and omission the last Government had resorted to in the belief that it would remain in power for the foreseeable future what has transpired so far will seem only chicken feed. The details will underline limitless horrors of the abuse of power, corruption, brutality, repression and downright illegalities. More need not be said at this stage. But what is even more comforting is that President Jayewardene has announced that he would appoint similar Commission towards the end of period of this Government so that all complaints could be investigated before the next elections. This should prove a check on those who seem to think the UNP was here for ever.

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QUIDNUNC

Protocol And Prince Charles

A protocol-minded reader has sent us the note published below in regard to what appeared in the Quidnuncs column of *Tribune* of June 3, 1978. He has also added comments on a letter that appeared in the *Tribune* of July 1, 1978 and also on note in the *Talking Point* column in the *Ceylon Observer* of July 16, 1978—all to clarify some tricky points in the matter of receiving foreign visiting VIPs.

PRINCE CHARLES—*TRIBUNE*, JUNE 3RD, 1978

1. The "visit" of Prince Charles last month must be distinguished from the visit of Prince Edward Windsor to India and of Prince Charles himself to India as being a fuelling stop-over for his aircraft as opposed to a proper visit. Indeed, the visit of Prince Edward can further be distinguished from that of Prince Charles' to India in that the former was made to a colony of the British empire and the latter to an independent sovereign state so that the two Princes of Wales were differently, though appropriately, received by the respective Indian authorities of the times.

2. It is a fact that Protocol courtesies, though generally based on international practice, does vary from country to country and unlike, for example, immunities and privileges of diplomats, is not embodied in any international convention nor, based on strict reciprocity. Thus, it is generally up to each State to extend protocol courtesies which, in its opinion, are appropriate in specific contexts.

3. In the event of a transit stop-over of a Head of State, Deputy Head of State (Heir apparent)

or Head of Government, it is customary for that State or its accredited representative in the State where the transit stop is to be made, to inform the latter of such a stop-over. This the British High Commission in Sri Lanka did in the case of Prince Charles and, quite correctly, requested use of the VIP Lounge during the 45 minute stop at Katunayake, presumably for the use of the Prince in case he decided to disembark. It should also be noted that, originally, the stop-over was to have been in the afternoon but that later it was postponed by 12 hours.

4. The State in which a transit stop-over is being made (and a 45 minute fuelling stop must again be distinguished from that of several hours/overnight when disembarkation is on the cards and the VIP has to be taken to a State Guest House or hotel) customarily extends protocol courtesies to the VIP by reserving the VIP lounge,

is clear that there is no "invitation" extended to the VIP to disembark. Generally, a VIP does not disembark at a late hour of the night or an early hour of the morning, but it also often happens that a VIP does not disembark even at a more reasonable hour. This is because it is a matter entirely left to his convenience and pleasure and it is not considered a discourtesy if he does not disembark. If this were not so, it is clear that no VIP would wish to insult a State which has granted landing rights to his special aircraft to re-fuel as was the case of Prince Charles.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR BY MR. RANJIT PIYADASA—*TRIBUNE* JULY 1, 1978

Mr. Piyadasa has further confused the issue by assuming that the Navy Commander is interchangeable with the Chief of Protocol with regard to their duties simply because of the sex of each of them which has no relevance to their official duties.

For his edification, the Minister in charge of ceremonials is the Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs who, however, is in charge of national ceremonials while it is the Minister of Foreign Affairs who is in charge of arrangements for visits by foreign VIPs, whether they be State visits or transit visits.

TALKING POINT—*CEYLON OBSERVER*, JULY 16, 1978

1. The reference to the two Bangladesh Ministers who visited Sri Lanka this month not having been met by their Sri Lanka counterparts is a confusion arising from the lack of knowledge of reception at the airport, of Ministerial visitors. Here again, protocol practice varies from country to country and is not necessarily based on reciprocity. Sri Lanka's practice is generally far more generous than that of most countries.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

As the Editor has been out of the island on a short journalistic visit in South India, the regular feature *EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK* will not appear this week. It will however appear next week.

ordering refreshments and sending persons whom it considers appropriate to receive him in case he decides to disembark during the stop-over. There is no obligation on its part to inform the representative of the State of the VIP as to who will be at the airport, nor does the latter enquire as to who they will be.

5. It is left entirely to the VIP to disembark or not and it is no discourtesy to those who are at the airport (about whom the VIP is unaware) nor to their State, if he does not disembark. Thus, It

2. The distinction to be made with regard to the visits of the Bangladesh Ministers is that they were different from official bilateral visits by Ministers who come either by invitation or who come to discuss matters of mutual interest by pre-arrangements and for whom official programmes are drawn up and who are cutsomarily received and seen off by their Sri Lanka counterparts.

Both Bangladesh Ministers came on their own initiative to discuss specific matters which were of primary interest to Bangladesh. As such, all calls requested by them were arranged and, in addition, both were hosted to Lunch or Dinner by their counterparts, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted their stay in Sri Lanka, provided them with transport and arranged excursions for them which is more than most countries do in similar circumstances. The same courtesies were extended to the Maldivian Minister of Finance who arrived about the same time, also on a specific mission.

* * *

THE NEW CONSTITUTION

A Constructive Comment

—Pros And Cons—

The justification for presenting the draft of a new constitution to replace the 1972 constitution is based on the claim that the UNP received a mandate from the people at the 1977 General Elections to 'draft, adopt and operate' a new constitution in which executive power will be vested in an elected president, the independence of the judiciary will be maintained and principles of representative democracy, freedom, equality

justice and fundamental human rights will be guaranteed. If there is force in such a claim, the position taken up by the TULF that their representatives received a mandate for a separate Tamil Eelam State cannot be lightly dismissed.

In view of the TULF having assumed the official leadership of the Opposition in the Parliament of a unitary state, it is reasonable to infer that they would have settled for less than a separate Tamil Eelam State even as a transitional arrangement provided the new Constitution contained provisions which enabled the Tamils to enjoy some measure of regional autonomy and self-government in such contiguous areas where the Tamil speaking people have traditionally lived as part of a pattern of regional autonomy and self-government throughout Sri Lanka. The immediate question to be asked is whether this Constitution contains any such provisions.

The answer to this question would have been in the affirmative if the Constitution incorporated some provisions to allay the fears and satisfy the sentiments of the Tamil speaking people, such as:—

(1) Provisions that no dislocation of a demographic group should be caused in any area by the wholesale introduction of new elements alien to the existing demographic group.

(2) Abolition of the Kachcheri System and its replacement by popularly elected village councils, divisional councils, district councils, regional councils, and the like making them viable administrative units on the basis of demographic, geographical, and economic considerations and vesting them with powers, functions and authority at varying stages and levels, and making the participation and

commitment of the people living within their confines real, meaningful and purposeful.

It needs to be stressed that this concept is generally referred to as decentralisation although in fact decentralisation is a top to bottom process, whereas what is proposed here is a bottom to top process.

(3) In the event of the restructuring of the organs of administration suggested above, it is not difficult to foresee the Legislature and the Executive being much smaller and less powerful than what they have been hitherto, concerning themselves with vital matters of national interest and importance such as finance, defence, foreign affairs, communications, foreign trade, higher education, river valleys development, large-scale industries and the like.

(4) District Ministers, in the first instance, to be representatives of the people of the District to which they are appointed i.e. the selection of the District Ministers must be left to the MPs representing the electorates of the District.

District Ministers to be vested with the power and authority to formulate plans for the economic, social, educational and cultural development of the District in consultation with popularly elected village councils, Town councils, Municipal Councils, Divisional Councils and District Councils (if they are set up), subject to such plans being integrated wherever appropriate, into an all-Island plan and funds being provided by Government for their implementation.

No provision has been made in the Constitution to meet such requirements.

On the contrary, several of the following unsatisfactory provisions

of the Constitution are anti-thetical to and militate against the achievement of the objectives outlined above.

(1) **Executive Presidential System**—Articles 4 (b), 30 (1), 32(3), 33, 35(1), 43(2), 44, 45 and 46 creating the omnipotent office of President who is not a member of Parliament, unanswerable to Parliament, independent of the support of Parliament and not in any meaningful way subject to the jurisdiction of the Courts.

(2) **Proportional Representation**—Article 99 in terms of which (a) any party polling less than 12½ % of the votes cast gets eliminated, (b) independents have to form into a group to contest elections (c) no provision is made for a combination of parties contesting on an agreed common program, and (d) no by-elections are provided for to test the popularity of the Government in the interim.

(3) **Provision** continues for "urgent bills" to be decided upon within twenty four hours—Article 122(1)(c)—misused by the previous Government and the present Government.

(4) **Provision** continues for the enactment of Laws inconsistent with the Constitution (Article 84), without the need to have recourse to a specific amendment of the Constitution for the purpose.

(5) **Creating an offence of conspiracy** to alter or repeal the constitution—Article 157. This would mean that no party can have the amendment of the constitution as the object of its propaganda meetings or even as an election issue in the next General Elections. (This has now been dropped Ed).

(6) **University Education**—Provision to Article 21(2) creates the possibility of certain faculties now having instruction through the Tamil medium in certain Uni-

versities (Campuses) being closed down.

(7) **Citizenship**—Article 26 contains no statement of principle on which citizenship would devolve under the constitution.

(8) **Expulsion of members and Imposition of civic disabilities** Article 81(1) provides for retrospective punishment on account of offences that a person is found guilty of by a Presidential Commission, in contravention of fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 13(6). In this connection, reference must also be made to Article 75(1) providing for enactments of laws having retrospective effect.

(9) **Fundamental rights** guaranteed under Article 13 are rendered nugatory by the wide ranging provisions of Article 16.

(10) **Foreign Investment Guarantees** Article 158 compromise the sovereignty of the country and the supremacy of Parliament to legislate in the national interest.

(11) **Changing priority** and substitution of members who have been declared elected (contained in Art. 99(12) is a dangerous provision.

(12) **The distinction** between persons and citizens is perpetrated in respect of many rights. This is at the move deplorable in face of the existence of stateless persons who know no home other than Sri Lanka.

Attention may now be directed to the welcome provisions contained in the constitution—

(1) **Articles 12(2) and 12(3)** on Fundamental Rights include the word "Language"

(2) **Article 19** defines Sinhala and Tamil as national languages; but it could have been worded as "The national languages of Sri Lanka are Sinhala and Tamil".

(3) **The proviso to Article 22(1)** provides for Tamil also as a language of administration in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. It would have been welcome if the word "also" had been omitted.

(4) **Article 22(2)** provides for correspondence with members of the public other than those knowing Sinhala being conducted in their language; but, there is no provision for the initiation of correspondence by the State and its agencies in such instances.

(5) **Article 23(1)** provides for enactment of Laws in Sinhala and Tamil.

(6) **Proviso to Article 24(1)** provides for the language of the Courts being Tamil in the North and East. Article 24(2), 24(3) and 24(4) provide for the use of Tamil in the other parts of the country for the benefit of Tamil speaking judges, jurors, attorneys and litigants. Despite all these, language rights are not enforceable (as Fundamental rights are under Article 17).

(7) **Article 26** abolishes the distinction between a citizen by descent and a citizen by registration.

(8) **The Directive Principles of State Policy** contain reference to Language in Articles 27(3) and 27(6).

(9) **Fundamental Duties** are provided for under Article 28.

(10) **Electoral Districts**—Article 98(4) recognises "qualified electors" as being the determining factor in the apportionment of electoral districts and not "persons" or "citizens" against which repeated representations had been made to successive Delimitation Commissions.

V. K.

Colombo.

August 3, 1978

FOR THE RECORD

On The New Constitution

—statement of the Civil Rights Movement—

In the time available it has not been possible for the Civil Rights Movement to make a comprehensive study and assessment of the proposed new Constitution. The relevant Gazette was issued only on July 17th and the Bill is now being proceeded with in the National State Assembly. We request that the Constitution be not finally adopted until there has been time for adequate study, debate and representations by the public.

In the meantime the Working Committee of the CRM has decided as a matter of urgency, to draw attention to certain features of the Bill. For the present our observations are limited to some aspects of the provisions relating to fundamental rights, judicial review of legislation, proportional representation, by-elections, expulsion of members of Parliament, language rights, advocating amendment of the Constitution, and foreign treaties.

(I) FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

In several respects there is an improvement on the present Constitution, for instance the provision of protection against torture or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the provision for fair trial and for the presumption of innocence. However the Working Committee makes the following observations:—

(a) We do not see why the fundamental right to be presumed innocent until one is proven guilty, and the right to be protected against retrospective penal legis-

ation, should be capable of restriction in the interests of national security. The latter is considered by the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to be an absolute right that cannot be derogated from in any circumstances.

(b) Most of the fundamental rights spelt out in the Constitution are subjected to a very wide range of possible restrictions. These include the interests of national security, public order, the protection of public health or morality, due recognition of the rights and freedom of others, and "meeting the just requirements of the general welfare of a democratic society". We submit that these exceptions are too wide and vague, and have been made applicable to too many of the rights provided for. For instance, even the right to equality before the law, and the right against discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, language, caste, sex, political opinion or place of birth are subject to these widely phrased restrictions. This is in contrast to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in which the possible departures from fundamental rights are much more strictly circumscribed.

(c) The freedom to form and join a trade union is stated to be subject to restriction in "the interests of the security of the staff and the property of the State agencies and public corporations". We cannot see how the forming or joining of a trade union can endanger the security of the staff or property of state enterprises and we fail to see any justification for this restriction.

(d) We regret the perpetuation of the distinction between persons and citizens in respect of many rights where we feel it should not exist, for example, freedom of speech and expression, freedom

of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom in public or in private to manifest one's religion in worship etc. This distinction assumes particular importance in Sri Lanka where there is a large population of stateless persons, many of whom are permanent residents who have been born and bred here and are engaged in production of the national wealth of the country. In respect of such persons who are in the country lawfully, we feel that there should be granted even those fundamental rights which one might be justified in refusing to nationals of other countries, such as the freedom to engage in any lawful occupation, profession, trade, business or enterprise; freedom of movement within Sri Lanka; and freedom to return to Sri Lanka (Articles 14 (g) (h) and (i).) It should be noted that such persons are, equally with citizens, expected to "uphold and defend the Constitution and the law," to "further the national interest and foster national unity", to "work conscientiously" in their chosen occupations. (See Article 28 which sets out the duties and obligations of "every person in Sri Lanka").

(e) We regret the provision that existing laws shall remain valid even if inconsistent with any of the fundamental rights laid down in the Constitution. The rights guaranteed by the Constitution should take priority over existing law wherever there is a conflict.

(f) We also draw attention to the grave implications of the express provision that the subjection of any person to any form of punishment recognised by any existing written law shall not be a contravention of the Chapter on fundamental rights. This seriously detracts from the protection against cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The

effect of this provision is not to secure the continuation of a punishment such as lashing for the limited number of offences for which it still exists under our law, for this is already achieved by the provision protecting existing laws. Its effect is to permit the extension in the future of such a punishment to any other offence (perhaps even for political offenders or errant journalists as happened in a neighbouring country recently?) There is no doubt that lashing, which involves the deliberate infliction of physical pain, is a cruel in human or degrading punishment. Corporal punishment is prohibited by the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, is prohibited under the Geneva Conventions, and has recently been declared unlawful as a degrading punishment by the European Court of Human Rights. Let alone providing for the extension of the type of punishment to other offences, it should find no place at all on our statute book if we are to fulfil our obligations under the DECLARATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF ALL PERSONS AGAINST TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT adopted unanimously by the United Nations in December 1975.

(g) A fundamental right providing that any punishment should be reasonable and not disproportionate to the offence should be included in the Constitution. We have on earlier occasions pointed out the need for such a safeguard in our country, where the death penalty and forfeiture of property have by emergency regulation been prescribed for even trivial offences.

(II) JUDICIAL REVIEW OF LEGISLATION

We regret the perpetuation of the unsatisfactory provision of the present Constitution which enables

legislation in conflict with the Constitution to be challenged only in the Bill stage. This is another serious detraction from the guaranteeing of fundamental rights, for once the Bill has become law the subject has no remedy. Although the Supreme Court has been substituted for the Constitutional Court to scrutinise proposed legislation, the time within which one can move the court remains the totally inadequate seven days from the Bill being placed on the Order paper in Parliament.

(II) PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

CRM has always supported the principle of proportional representation on the basis that it is more democratic. A major reason is that it enables representation of smaller groups and minority views. The provision of a cut off point of 1/8 of the votes cast in each electoral district, however, destroys this advantage and can lead to the total disfranchisement of an important and substantial minority opinion, which may well be distributed throughout the country. This can also lead to the stifling on an emerging new force which would otherwise have the potential of developing. History has shown that many important political forces have had small beginnings.

(IV) BY-ELECTIONS

The present NSA was elected on the existing system of voting for individual candidates. Whatever may be the position after the next general election is held under the new system, it is only reasonable that any vacancy in the present NSA be filled by a by-election under the present law. Furthermore, as CRM has frequently insisted the sovereignty of the people does not mean that the people exercise their vote at a general election every so many years and are expected

to keep quiet in between. By-elections are a time honoured method by which our people express their opinion of the performance of a government in between general elections, viz. the many occasions on which in the past seats held by the government have been lost in this manner. To provide that no by-elections shall be held during the life time of the present NSA but that instead any vacancy is to be filled by a party nomination is to deprive the electorate of an important right.

(V) EXPULSION OF MEMBERS

The provision that if an MP resigns or is expelled from his party, his seat falls vacant and is to be filled by a nomination, is similarly unacceptable as regards the present NSA which has been elected on the existing system of voting for individual candidates. It is an unwarranted fetter on the right of a chosen representative of the people to act according to his conscience or to oppose his party leadership if he feels it is pursuing wrong policy. If the argument is that even under the present system people may have voted for the party as much as for the candidate, then the answer is that at least the vacancy should be filled at a by-election, at which the issue of the MP's conduct is referred to the people who voted him in. Whether the MP is a traitor who has betrayed his party, or whether it is the party which has betrayed its pledges, is a matter for the electorate to decide.

(VI) LANGUAGE RIGHTS

The incorporation of certain specific rights of the Tamil speaking people in the Constitution is an important improvement on the pre-existing position.

(VII) ADVOCATING AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

The new Constitution makes it a very serious offence (punishable by 10 years imprisonment and mandatory forfeiture of all property) to advocate, attempt, instigate etc. the amendment of the Constitution otherwise than in the manner provided in the Constitution. (Article 157). If the offence is committed by a party or a candidate at an election, then the nomination papers are null and void. It should be noted that this drastic provision is not limited to any attempt to overthrow the Constitution by violence, but would include the advocating of, say, the setting up of a Constituent Assembly by a process that may be both peaceful and democratic though not in accordance with the procedure prescribed. Had such a provision existed in the Soulbury Constitution, the adoption of the present Republican Constitution by the Constituent Assembly (in the work of which all parties elected to the last Parliament participated) would have been impossible. This provision is an unwarranted interference with the right of peaceful discussion and dissent, and in any event the punishment is disproportionate.

This provision has been dropped
—Ed.)

(VIII) FOREIGN TREATIES

The new Constitution provides that where Parliament by a resolution passed by a 2/3rds majority approves any Treaty or Agreement entered into by the Government with the Government of a foreign State for the promotion or protection of the investments in Sri Lanka of such foreign State, its nationals, or companies then such Treaty or Agreement shall have the force of law in Sri Lanka and no written

law shall be enacted or executive or administrative action shall be taken in contravention of the provisions of such Treaty or Agreement.

This provision goes beyond any reasonable requirement for the protection of foreign investments. It enables such a treaty or agreement to be incorporated into our law even though it may be inconsistent with any of the other provisions of the Constitution including the fundamental rights. Whereas restrictions are placed on the fundamental rights of the people in the interest of national security, public health or morality, etcetera, no parallel restrictions are imposed on the rights that can be conferred on foreign investors. Furthermore, it is particularly unacceptable that such a Treaty or Agreement becomes part of our law by-passing the normal legislative process. The passing of a resolution by Parliament is very different from the passing of a Bill. A Bill has ordinarily to be published in the Gazette, which means that its contents become known to the public, and any citizen can petition the Supreme Court to determine whether it is inconsistent with the Constitution. A resolution need not be so published, and cannot be referred to the Supreme Court. The Treaty or Agreement with the foreign State can thus become part of our law unbeknown to and unchallenged by the public. This is not compatible with the principle of enabling the people to participate in the decision making process of government essential to a democratic society and recognised in the directive principles of state policy.

R. Siriwardena
Secretary.

Civil Rights Movement
of Sri Lanka

X X

LETTER

Mahaweli Diversion Project

Sir,

Hunting Corporation USA has been employed (re-employed) to draw feasibility report for accelerated Mahaweli Diversion. The Hunting Corporation was associated with the USOM and Irrigation Department feasibility report which was submitted to the Ceylon Government in 1961 and subsequently rejected by the team of UN experts under Dr. Fialkoski.

An interim report was submitted by the USOM in August 1959 to enable the Government's "committed Programme" for partial diversion of Mahaweli in 1960. This official statement by the Director of USOM and the Director of Irrigation of Ceylon Govt. establishes the fact that without the approval of the NSA, the Mahaweli Diversion Scheme was to be handed over to a US Multinational Corporation (the origin of the term committed programme is a mystery).

As proof of the worth of the scheme the feasibility scheme of the USOM maintained that the benefit cost ratio of the scheme was 2.3 to 1 the United Nations team of experts after careful investigation of the energy development and from agricultural benefits proved that the benefit cost ratio of USOM undertaking was 1.82 to 1 and not 2.3 to 1. Such a gross miscalculation amounts to a fraud to misdirect the government. (In calculating agricultural benefit the cost of production is 60-70% of the value of increase of production—this factor was ignored by USOM

Even before the Hunting Corporation have commenced their feasibility reports for the second time the accelerated Mahaveli project the government has sold the forests to timber contractors. Several years will have to elapse before the permanent settlers will start cultivating their allotments. During this period the felling of timber, logging, indiscriminate opening up of roads, introduction of heavy tractors and removal of soil cover etc., will continue unabated.

In the complete absence of scientific methods of conservation, soil erosion will develop into a major disaster. Timber logging and clearing of forest have to be considered as a major problem of land development. Exploiting of forests by timber contractors has been a major tragedy in both the wet and dry zones of our country. The use of anchor chain for up-rooting and burning of felled jungle have not yet recommenced. Is there any guarantee that for quick returns these devastating methods may not be re-introduced to destroy the sick humans accommodated for several centuries.

S. A. Wickremasinghe

Colombo.
12.7.78

* * *

Grama Sastra-11

Scribblings on Uva Villages

Air Or Water, Or Both

by Gamiya

Some time ago, we told you about the Tragedy in Kammala, of how three young girls had a watery, slimy grave because they had no water for a decent bath.

No one helped them with a well, or with bathing facilities with the well. But people need not only water but air also. Restoration of tanks is a necessity, and is slowly getting top-priority in some of the Dry zone areas, i.e. not only the loud sounding of the big Mahaveli schemes but the simple day-to-day anicut, channel, sluice, small tanks—needs that pulullate in lower Uva.

But we must help people with air and breathing space. If unwittingly you built your house in an ancient tank-bed in the early 20th century, then you'll surely have to quit when it is late 20th, if the "development" bug has bitten into most people. I knew of one such family in K—goda: seven children. The eldest was married and was away when the family was rudely evicted. Three families were evicted, large jak trees were thrown down ruthlessly; four suffered the onrush of a bulldozer. The house, built of mudbrick, could have been saved, but once told they were politically guilty in a way, they were also told, "the house must go". The father was an asthmatic, and gave us his story between spasms, despite our suggestion to the contrary and to keep silence. Bed-ridden for 15 years, he had a pretty daughter sleeping at the far end of the room, paralyzed. They even spoke of epilepsy. After 30 years of residence and labour in the tank-bed, they were sad they were being evicted without any thought of the morrow for them.

Now, in the small 16x14 house of *talkola*, they were wondering when they would be thrown out. It was a palmyrah-leaf (*talkola*) house with no windows and much insecurity. One place was 8x8 with a 2x5 door and no window; the other place was 8x6 with a 2x5 door and no windows. No wonder the five householder-members had

respiratory trouble. The PHI should have passed that way but he had 80 villages to see to, and how can he see to drop-outs and thrown-outs? Two government servants lived in this air-less smoke-filled affair they called a house. More than that, the door are closed at night and the residue of smoke circulates in the house, they said.

We went up to see the newly-restored bund of the Wewa (name we withhold for security reasons) but for the last ten months prior to our visit, it had not received a sluice! The local engineer had tried and tried, but some mechanical device was not being easily passed or sent into this remote region from bureaucratic headquarters.

The poor air-less, waterless folk in that house were hoping that some redress will come with the new government, and now the new government has come, and we hope, with it has come redress. How sad it is when we have not to rely on the State but on passing governments and passing parties, constantly on the run, chasing each other like rain-drops on a telephone line after the rains. "Open that window, get me some air, I'm suffocating", or "Hold me, I'm drowning"—are the constant cry of the apparently hopeless in the deep countryside.

* * *

SNIPPETS

Whoever could make two ears of corn of two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together. Jonathan Swift.

SRI LANKA CHRONICLE

July 13 – July 19

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

CDN—Ceylon Daily News; CDM—Ceylon Daily Mirror; CO—Ceylon Observer; ST—Sunday Times; DM—Dinamina; LD—Lankadipa; VK—Virakesari; ATH—Aththa; SM—Silumina; SLD—Sri Lankadipa; JD—Janadina; DP—Dinapathi; SU—Sun; CM—Chintamani; WK—Weekend; RR—Riviresa; EN—Eelanadu; IDPR—Information Dept. Press Release; DK—Dinakara; DW—Dawasa.

THURSDAY, JULY 13: About 400,000 public servants will benefit by certain regulations made under the Credit Council Law by the Minister of Finance; one of the benefits is that those of the lower rungs will be able to obtain bigger loans. The government has introduced a scheme to expedite payment of pensions to Public Servants; under this scheme separate pension units will be set up in ministries and government departments. Appreciation of the way in which minority Muslims are treated in Sri Lanka was expressed in a report submitted to the closing session of the first Asian Islamic Conference now sitting in Karachi, Pakistan. 2500 new appointments have been made by the Health Department in the first ten months since the government assumed office. A stupendous 'frittering away' of state funds in the form of a variety of frauds has been discovered by the 'Flying' squad of the Ministry of Irrigation, Power etc. During investigations carried out recently. The Agriculture Department and the Department of Forest Conservation will issue nearly 2.5 mil-

lion fruit and timber plants for the National Tree Planting Campaign to be inaugurated by the President on July 22. Only two pass holders per patient will be permitted to visit a patient in the Colombo group of hospitals from next week—CDN. Thirty two Port Cargo Corporation employees found sleeping while on duty have been interdicted. The Constitution is expected to be debated during the first week of August. A large quantity of locally manufactured textiles of all varieties which are in great demand are to be given to a State owned textile company which is to be floated shortly—CDM. The composition of local government bodies is expected to be radically changed shortly; in future a new local authority known as the Rural Council is to be established to replace the existing Town Council and Village Councils. The dispute between Mr. C. Rajadurai, the TULF's first MP for Batticaloa and Mr. Kasi Aanandan, a militant TULF youth leader has been settled amicably according to party sources. The Minister of Commerce of Bangladesh Mr. M. Salfur Rahman will arrive in Colombo today on a three day official visit. Total export earnings for the first quarter of 1978 increased by Rs. 1268 million or 80% over the earnings in the same period last year according to the Central Bank report—SU. All those accused in the Alfred Durrayappah murder case except for the first accused have been released. The Minister of Justice has said that all administrative affairs will be carried on in Tamil in the Tamil speaking areas—VK. The Minister of Food and Co-operatives has instructed all co-ops to be opened from 9 am to 6 pm for the convenience of consumers—IDPR No. 27. The government has decided to restrict the number of skilled and semi skilled persons going abroad

for employment as the first step to stop the brain drain. The Minister of Finance has said that 100,000 tons of rice will be exported shortly—DW. The US told the Geneva Disarmament Conference that work had already started on making the main UN arms control forum more effective. Jewish dissident Anatoly Scharensky on trial for his life before a Moscow court faced questions at a closed session yesterday about allegations that he betrayed Soviet defence secrets to the west. International observers accused Bolivia's military rulers yesterday of widespread fraud and intimidation in last Sunday's elections. The speaker of the Lebanese Parliament held crisis talks with Syrian leaders in Damascus yesterday as urgent diplomatic efforts continued to resolve the deadlock in his embattled country—CDN. The Israeli government appeared to have been driven deeper into a political corner yesterday by the Middle East peace document drafted in Vienna for submission to the Socialist International; government officials accorded a frosty reception to the document. China has reported increases in industrial production in the first six months of this year but adds that the figures are high only because of poor output last year—CDM. Ambassador to the UN Andrew Young said in an interview with a Paris paper that in his view several hundred possibly thousands of persons are currently serving in US prisons whom he regards as political prisoners—SU.

FRIDAY, JULY 14: Canada has offered to undertake the Rs. 200 million Maduru Oya project on the recommendation of the NEDECO study team now in the island; she thus becomes the latest donor among foreign aid contributors to the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Scheme which has found world wide favour and

acceptance. Over one million farmers will enjoy the benefits of a new Insurance Scheme to be introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands; it will take the form of an Insurance cum pension scheme that provides the payment of a monthly pension for a life or a lump sum payment. A floor price scheme to cover all subsidiary food crops will be introduced soon and for this purpose an Agricultural Produce Marketing Board will be appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands. The GMOA has proposed a national health scheme for Sri Lanka to solve the country's present health problems including the shortage of doctors and overcrowding in hospitals—CDN. The Minister of Agriculture has called for the resignation of the Chairman and members of the Board of Directors of the Fertilizer Corporation. The foundation stone for the first factory at the Investment Promotion Zone at Katunayake will be laid by the Minister of Textile Industries. A National Aquatic Resource Management and Development Authority would be set up by the government for a comprehensive and scientific exploration of aquatic resources instead of ad hoc measures adopted earlier—CDM. Leading private sector establishments are to train white collar workers in the state sector in specialised fields under a new scheme now being finalised by the government. The General Council of the TULF meets tomorrow at Vavuniya to elect its new leader. A farmer's insurance scheme guaranteeing social security to millions of Sri Lanka's peasantry as well as araking in savings for development investment will be established shortly—SU. The Minister of Fisheries has decided to launch a Rs. 97 million project which will cover the whole cost to produce 280,000 tons of fish needed for

the industry—LD. Rs. 10 million have been allocated this year to build houses for shanty dwellers; the Local Government Department hopes to destroy all shanties in the next five years—DM. Ousted Home Minister Charan Singh withdrew his resignation from the ruling Janata Party national executive and central parliamentary board signalling an end to the current crisis in the party leadership. The French President yesterday urged western Europe to go ahead with the setting up of a European monetary system even if Britain declined to take part in it.—CDN. Ministers meeting in Khar-toum to prepare for next week's OAU Summit return today to the explosive issue of Foreign Military intervention in Africa. Israel's Defence Minister Ezer Weizman reopened stalled West Asia peace talks with Egyptian President in a surprise meeting in Austria. The House of Representatives yesterday supported President Carter's decision to allow export of nuclear fuel to India even though it does not observe International safeguards against nuclear weapon proliferation. China has tightened its control over the overflow of refugees from Vietnam into two of its Southern Provinces saying those returning must have repatriation certificates from the Chinese Embassy in Hanoi and exit visas from Vietnamese authorities—SU.

SATURDAY, JULY 15: The government's objective is to refashion the consumer pattern of Sri Lankans in food on the lines of the rice eating era as prevailed during the time of Sinhala monarchies; this was said in the NSA by the Minister of Finance yesterday in answer to a question by an opposition MP as to why the government had increased the price of flour, fertilizer, cement and bus fares. A National Youth Service

Force modelled on the disciplinary lines of the armed forces will be set up next month to undertake the considerable quantum of manual work envisaged in the Accelerated Mahaweli Scheme and other national development schemes in the country. A scheme to utilise sparetime services of the GMOA membership and thus ease the current shortage of doctors was proposed at a discussion the Minister of Health had with GMOA members. The Sri Lanka State Tracing Corporation has set up a scheme of assistance to encourage the import of goods by the private sector. The Minister of Finance said in the NSA yesterday that the government wished to inculcate the rice eating habit because eating wheat meant that we were only fattening the western world. Sri Lanka will collaborate with China in an intermediate technological project connected with agriculture. A High-powered Salaries Commission will shortly examine the salaries and wages of public servants said the Minister of Irrigation yesterday—CDM. A massive development complex embracing six electorates and 15 urban, town and village council areas within a radius of about 15 miles from Colombo city has been planned by the government. Pensioners, recipients of widows and orphans pensions and their dependant children will in future be entitled to free railway warrants for travel by the CGR—SU. A large number of students identity cards have been found in a dustbin in Baseline Road; this raises many questions as to the fate of identity cards—DP. The Buildings Material Corporation has begun the construction of three huge factories to manufacture cement bricks. The Ministry of Irrigation, Power and Highways hopes to electrify 600 villages in the next five years—LD. America's Ambassador to the UN

Andrew Young appeared on French television saying that Cuban and Soviet influence in Africa was vastly over estimated. Britain's ruling Labour Party successfully defended two parliamentary seats in probably the last polls before a general election. President Carter began political talks with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt today on the first full day of his state visit to West Germany—SU. A Soviet court yesterday sentenced dissident Alexander Ginzburg to eight years in labour camp on charges of anti Soviet agitation and propaganda. The US and the Soviet Union said yesterday the latest round of talks to limit strategic arms had been useful, suggesting possible movement towards an agreement—SU. The Yugoslav Parliament approved today government's action in preparing the Yugoslav platform for the forthcoming non aligned ministerial meeting in Belgrade. Eritrean secessionists said today Ethiopia had launched a four pronged offensive with troops, planes and warships to recapture its strategic Red Sea Province. Pressure mounted on President Carter today to fire his maverick UN Ambassador Andrew Young for his public comments about political prisoners in American jails. The government of Bangladesh and Burma have concluded an agreement on the repatriation of Burmese refugees who had crossed over to Bangladesh during recent months—CDN.

SUNDAY, JULY 16: The government last week finalised a timetable for the enactment of a new constitution for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka may export local rice to the Maldives and Bangladesh in return for maldivian fish and dried fish from the Maldives and a variety of goods from Bangladesh. The General Council of the TULF meeting in Vavuniya yesterday elec-

ted Nallur MP Mr. M. Sivasithamparam as President of the Front. The government has approved a proposal made by the Trade minister to set up a statutory body called the Sri Lanka Inventor's Commission to encourage the country's inventors and assist in research development and manufacture of their products—SO. District Ministers will be appointed in stages but all such appointments will be completed within the next two months said the President. Negotiations have been finalised to recruit 150 engineers from India, Pakistan and the Philippines under the Mahaweli development project said the Adviser on Economic Affairs to the President. Legislation will shortly be introduced to set up an Energy Authority to develop hydro and thermal power. The government has accepted the position that the present cost of living affected wage earners most; the three man salary review committee will this week begin to go into this matter and recommend quick relief. Steps are being taken to award post-graduate medical degrees in Sri Lanka in the major courses of study within one year—ST. The government is devising a plan by which patients who are now suffering hardship to get treatment in government hospitals, will be able to get treatment at private hospitals free of charge—CM. Research conducted by the Leather Corporation has revealed that within the span of a single year the number of people wearing footwear has increased five fold—RR. American officials believe UN Ambassador Andrew Young will survive the furor of his claim that there might be thousands of US political prisoners; but another such gaffe could finish his diplomatic career they said. Ecuador, whose 148 year old history has been studied by a long series of military

coups will renew its search for political stability when the country vies tomorrow for the first time in 10 years—SO. US President Carter called for a re-uniting of East and West Germany. Grenada has suggested that this year's UN General Assembly consider the setting up of a UN Organisation or department to deal with unidentified flying objects—WK. President Carter ordered UN Ambassador Andrew Young to shut up after his remark on US political prisoners which undermined the President's condemnation of Soviet dissident trials this week, according to a senior US Official. The Soviet Union today coupled a bitter condemnation of Schcharansky with a warning that President Carter's human rights campaign was leading towards Soviet-American confrontation—ST.

MONDAY, JULY 17: The two investment promotion zones that are to be set up at Katunayake and Biyagama will be in full operation by December this year; sixty proposed projects have been investigated; of these 20 have already been approved and agreements signed in respect of three; at present representatives of 20 multi-millionaires are in Sri Lanka exploring the possibility of investing in the Investment Promotion Zone. Sri Lanka at present spends Rs. Rs 4000 million on food imports; if this amount is saved it will be possible to increase the salaries of public servants by 75% said Mr. Gamini Disanayake yesterday. About 2.9 million children from nearly 10,000 schools throughout the country would play a leading role in the National Tree Planting Campaign at the Village level said the Minister of Agriculture. The Chairman of the Central Transport Board who feels that absenteeism is the main reason for the disruption of bus services said that measures to minimise

absenteeism will be introduced soon—CDN. Trincomalee belonged to the whole of Sri Lanka and it would remain so in the future said the President at the passing out parade of the navy in Trincomalee. Approximately 1.3 million young men and women between the ages of 15 and 30 were unemployed and this was a highly explosive situation said the Secretary to the Ministry of Plan Implementation—CDM. Consolexpo has received orders from Switzerland for the supply of ready made shirts and ladies garments from Sri Lanka; 100 small manufacturers will be picked to supply this order. The police will today begin rounding up all children found begging in the streets—SU. The General Secretary of the TULF said in a statement that the unity among the Tamils was strong because there had been no dispute over the election of office bearers of the TULF recently—EN. The present system of choosing students for the university may be changed from next year; the committee appointed to look into the university admission system has recommended changes in the system—DM. The Food Department has pointed out that foodstuffs imported by Sri Lanka get spoilt because they are transported in rejected ships as they are cheaper. The government has decided not to spend unnecessarily on the celebrations of the first anniversary of the government—LD. The Minister of Agriculture has said that Milk Board will have to be closed if the production is not increased by the end of the year—DW. Mr. Carter gave repeated assurances during his stay at Berlin that the US would maintain its commitment to defend West Germany and West Berlin against an external attack. The Cyprus government said today it would oppose Turkey's bid to obtain guest status within the

non-aligned movement — CDN. India has reacted favourably to Turkish inquiries about closer ties with the non aligned movement. Turkish Foreign Minister said yesterday on his return from New Delhi. Switzerland has sent the Soviet government an offer to accept all dissidents currently in prison or on trial in the Soviet Union—SU.

TUESDAY, JULY 18: The Public sector performance for the first quarter January to March this year shows that it is 50 % behind the target said the Secretary to the Ministry of Plan Implementation. Students in higher grades can now study certain subjects in English; this order has been made on the recommendation of the Minister of Education. Sweden has decided to give Sri Lanka 10 million pounds as straight aid this year part of which Sri Lanka can use to buy essentials and urgently needed goods from any part of the world. Five hundred science teachers will be recruited for service this year. The Armed services and the police have made elaborate arrangements to take part in the national tree planting campaign. Sixty teachers who had been suspended from service for taking part in insurgent activities have been reinstated. The government has indicated its concern on the mass exodus of technically qualified public servants now moving into the private sector. The Matara Campus to be set up at a cost of Rs. 160 million is to be formally opened on August 12—CDN. A state officer who retires from the public service is to be paid a provisional pension a month after he retires by the Department he worked last; The Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs has drawn up a new pension scheme to give effect to this. The High Court Judge of Colombo yesterday acquitted and discharged the

last of the accused in the Durayappah murder case on a unanimous verdict of the jury. Applications for adoption can henceforth be made only to the City Magistrate—CDM. The former Minister of Public Administration Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike filed papers in the Supreme Court seeking a writ of certiorari to quash the findings of the G. P. A. de Silva Commission that probed the affairs of the Colombo Municipal Council against him. Consultative Committees for the Fisheries Ministry are to be set up on a three tiered basis—electoral, district and national—SU. The CID is investigating the case where a large number of identity cards were found in a dustbin—DP. Co-ops will for the first time compete with boutiques when they begin selling kerosene oil, coconuts and firewood. The Minister of Education has decided to set up an Agricultural University in Anuradhapura—DW. The Chief Ministers of India's four Southern states have passed a strong resolution against attempts to impose Hindi as the official language of South India. The co-ordinating Bureau of the non-aligned countries has accepted a draft agenda for the forthcoming ministerial meeting in Belgrade. Indian PM met the former Home Minister Charan Singh for the first time since he last met Mr. Singh on June 30—CDN. Defence Minister Weizman delivered new Egyptian proposals to the Israeli Cabinet yesterday and was promptly barred from future direct contacts with President Anwar Sadat. Economic and financial experts from the OPEC were trying to hammer out an agreement on ways of protecting their oil revenues from the effect of the decline of the dollar. A military style operation involving more than 500 men led to the seizure of upto 18 tons of marijuana the biggest drug haul

in Canadian history according to a government spokesman—CDM. The seven major industrial democracies yesterday reached agreement on a co-ordinated programme for international economic recovery based on action by the US, West Germany and Japan. African Foreign Ministers yesterday declined to take a stand on a demand by Somalia for the expulsion of Cuba from the non-aligned movement on the ground of its alliance with Russia—SU.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 19: Sri Lanka will get a new constitution on August 17. Fish catch in the South has shown an unexpected increase during the last two weeks. The government will soon introduce a scheme of incentives both in the public and private sectors to make the people work harder said the Minister of Trade. The Ceylon Bank Employees Union will call out its entire membership to a token strike tomorrow. The government has decided to grant increased relief to public servants who die whilst in service and to family members of deceased pensioners—CDN. The government would shortly appoint an Administrative Reforms Commission to make recommendations and suggestions to achieve the highest standards of efficiency in the administration and eliminate bottlenecks in the administrative set up. Unemployed persons who claim the monthly unemployment allowance of Rs. 50 would be offered a job by the government; if they refuse to accept the second job offer the allowance will be withdrawn. Sri Lanka has requested the Chinese government to postpone for early next year shipment of a consignment of 32,000 tons of rice scheduled for the latter part of this year, this is the sequence to the bumper paddy harvest during the season which has caused problems of storage—CDM. The

President last week directed the Minister of Trade to expedite legislation for the establishment of a Share Market before the actual work on the FTZ commences. The Minister of Cultural Affairs has set up a one man commission of inquiry to probe into the activities and the alleged irregularities of the National Museums Department during the period 8.5.70 to 30.6.78—SU. The government is now examining the possibilities of granting jobs to children of employees in government departments and corporations when their parents vacate the posts—DP. The Minister of Fisheries has said that Rs. 90 million in the form of fisheries loans have not been repaid—LD. The dollar weakened all round the world today when international foreign exchange market gave their assessment of what had been achieved at the Bonn economic summit. The death toll in Mexico's disastrous gas tanker explosion could reach hundred or more government investigators said. Shops owned by Asians and West Indians closed today in parts of East End London in protest against alleged racial assaults by extremist right wing groups—CDN. East and West negotiators are currently discussing an exchange of prisoners, possibly including prominent dissidents lately jailed in the Soviet Union. Egyptian officials complained that the US and Israel had set their objectives to — in West Asian Peace talks in England. A Moscow court today upheld a slander suit against too low American correspondents and ordered them to publish retractions of stories they wrote about a televised confession of a Russian dissident being jailed—SU.

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CARAVAN FAMILY—18

On Leaving Jaffna

by Inna Trimmer

Back in their hideout under the palmyrah, everyone voted for an early night. Soosaimuttu had excelled himself with a dinner that was all Tamil, from the tomato rasan, followed by an indescribable dish called khool composed of palmyrah root (kottekelango) flour, prawns, seer fish, rice, tamarind juice and heaven alone knows what else, to the sweet which we said was payasam.

When mummie asked him what ingredients were used he was very vague. "Semolina, Sultanas and cadjunuts, milk and sugar, flavoured with rose water", was his reply.

Soon it was "lights out" in the little camp. The townfolk were still drawing water from the great cemented well close by when they fell asleep lulled into dreamland with the steady, slow creaking of the whole palmyrah tree well-sweep as it swung up and down with the palmyrah leaf basket that did duty for a bucket.

Next morning they broke up camp. Tents were taken down and everything stowed away for their departure after lunch. A last dip in the sea; a last meal under the feathery margosa tree and they were ready to go. A last goodbye sadly said.

"I dread this journey", sighed mummie as she took her seat in the launch. But Soosaimuttu reassured her "I have charmed the spirit of the waves with mantarams and he will be quiet."

Whatever the reason the boisterous waves of the rough crossing were not quite as violent as on the day they came to Delft and as the Sea Spray chugged along they were even able to enjoy the thirteen miles of sea that lay between them and the nearest land.

"To the right! Look on your right!" called daddy.

A small flotilla of catamarans were approaching from the north, and as they came alongside they could clearly see the strange cargo. To their amazement it was not only the usual crew of men but women and children as well, besides dogs, fowls and all the paraphernalia of household life.

"They are on their way to Delft", said daddy, "to form another fishing wadi. This is how they go from place to place in their nomadic life."

"But won't they be drowned? Those poor little babies and children!" asked mummie.

"And the dogs!" broke in Varuni. "I even saw a cat."

Daddy laughed. "I'll tell you a story, a perfectly true story. Some years ago the Medical Officer of Delft was on holiday with his wife, in Jaffna. When the day came for their return to the island the wind was blowing great guns. Even the sea spray did not dare venture forth in a sea that roared death with every mountainous wave. The doctor was told that it would be days before the crossing was possible. He was a man of integrity. He counted his work, his duty to the people on that lonely island above life itself.

"Three brave fishermen agreed to take him across on their catamaran. His wife, as fearless as himself, said she must accompany him. Two chairs were tied down with hawsers to the logs of the primitive craft. The doctor and his wife took their seats. Lashed to the chairs with ropes that entwined their bodies, they sat upright, held firmly down for otherwise they would have been washed overboard.

They set out at dawn. A whole day they tossed, buffeted and some-

times submerged by a sea that was a maelstrom; into the waves and up again.

Late in the evening, as night shadows were falling those five intrepid mortals who braved the elements and won, entered the peace of Mavethurai harbour."

The sun was barely, a hand-breadth above the western horizon when they finally reached the little cove in Velanai where Jason was peacefully resting. Ayah and Simon gave them a great welcome. "Dinner already finished making" was Ayah's greeting while Simon hugged each child in turn.

It was good to see Jason again in spite of the sadness of a goodbye for ever, possibly, to Delft. Daddy suggested a sea bathe, so that washed away all the heat and weariness, and burden of the long day just passed, in the warm, calm waters of the bay. Later with comfy chairs drawn up on the beach they discussed future plans.

"We shall be leaving day after tomorrow" was Daddy's verdict.

"Mummie sighed: "All good things, I suppose must come to an end."

"And bad things, too," Daddy replied cheerily.

The whole of the last day was spent sailing in Soosaimuttu's Sun Fish. With food enough for every meal, bathing kit, a mat and cushion for Mummie to rest on, they set out early, explored innumerable islands and beaches, carefree and happy in these last few hours of dolce far niente.

Up betimes next morning, with Jason all iready to leave, they packed themselves in and drove through a sleeping island, to the jetty where Soosaimuttu awaited them. Early though it was, the roadstead was alive with the hustle and bustle of much coming and going.

Everything ready, Soosaimuttu?" asked Daddy as he jumped off the front seat. "Ai, ai, dorai!"

"Come on down, all of you. Here's where we dismount. You go on Simon. Take the first ferry and cross over and come to the jetty at Jaffna."

Mummie looked her surprise and said it too.

"What are you after Richard. How d'you think we'll get to Jaffna if Jason leaves us here?"

For answer he pointed to a great old dhoney blackened with age and the elements rocking at anchor close by.

"What do you mean?"

"Here's our craft. This is our transport. Come on children, get in. We shall take the ancient waterway to Jaffna."

Too astonished for words, they clambered over the salty, sticky gunwale and took their seats wherever they could find them. Mummie found a soft and comfortable spot on a mound of green leaves covered over with an old sack.

"My goodness!" she said, "What next!"

Then Daddy got in, followed by Soosaimuttu. The crew were already in their places. With a mighty push the dhoney was released from its moorings. Cumbrously it moved forward as if lazy to leave its resting place. Then the great brown, weather-beaten sail was hoisted. The wind filled it and away went the old ship like a gigantic butterfly with wings out-spread, skimming over the water as if feather light.

They passed the Sun Fish beached under a palm.

"Goodbye Sun Fish", shouted Ranjit. "Thank you for the fun and pleasures you gave us."

But mummie was silent. Words had failed her.

"Ha! you," shouted Daddy. "Where are your thoughts? Kandy-Ganipola?". This was one of his specialities for day dreaming. "Take your last look at Velanai island, holding the horizon on the right".

So close to its shores were they sailing that they could see the islanders at their morning ablutions, the children at play in the early sunlight, little thatched houses with clean swept compounds, tobacco gardens, green and flourishing all the little intimacies of the flower of the Northern Islands—Velanai.

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FOLK TALES OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE—4

George Marzipan by Glucorasa

It was a Public Holiday—a day all workers look forward to. In fact there are more people in their offices and work places on public holidays than on working days. You will ask me why it should be so. Well, my dear friends, there is only one reason. On public holidays, our government pays double overtime to those who are wise enough to get to their work places. This was one such day. But I was not going to my office. I was wandering aimlessly along the main roads of the City of Colombo, which incidentally are looking nicer each day and cleaner too. I suddenly thought I should have a closer look at the BMICH. I had been inside once, but in the rush and melee I could not see much of its beauty outside. You see, very often we are misled by external appearances, so that I wanted to be quite certain that BMICH outside is just as nice as it is inside. I jumped on to one of the CTB wrecks that came along, travelling on the foot-board. Can you imagine, I was

helped on to this position by one of the guardians of the law himself! Perched precariously, I was also frightened that I could drop off any time—but this guardian of the law assured me that if I fell, he would follow me, even to Kanatte—he of course did not say whether dead or alive.

Some one rang the bell furiously and the bus stopped. I jumped off, thanked the guardian of the law, and made sure that he had not picked my pocket. Thus reassured, I walked across to a vantage point from which to view the majestic building. It was a kind morning. The sun was mercifully shielded by a heavy bank of clouds. I looked around, forgetting for the nonce that all workers will be in their work places on this Public Holiday. I saw a solitary figure seated under the tree, looking up intently at the same building I had myself come to see. He had a Yashica slung round his neck. From the distance, I thought it could be one of our doctors with their stethoscope round their necks. The lesser known of this tribe usually do this—hoping it would impress others. No. It was my friend George Marzipan. He was absorbed so much that I thought that he was praying. I never disturb any one thus seeking communion with God. I remained at a respectable distance. George Marzipan, turned round and saw me.

"Good morning Sir, I am so very glad to see you."

"Forgive me Marzipan if I had disturbed you from your meditations".

"You did not. I came along today after signing the attendance register to have a closer look at the BMICH. I will get my double pay alright, provided I sign off at 4.15 pm."

"Then Marzipan, you and I are on the same wavelength! I came

to see this building myself. What is it round your neck George?"

"Its a Yashica."

"Wonderful. Can you take a shot of me with the BMICH as a background please? I can then post prints to my friends, instead of buying X'mas cards."

Marzipan came close to me. Not knowing his intentions, I backed. I could back no further, because I had reached the wall and the sentry was getting a little suspicious of me.

George whispered "Sir, there is no film inside. In fact, I pinched it off a tourist after getting him drunk on Kassippu. I usually take it with me, just to impress people."

"Splendid George, splendid. I am proud to be your friend. Next time I have an invitation to attend a Seminar, you should loan it to me Marzipan. And pray, why have you not been to see me for some time. I tried to get you at 12345, but no one seemed to know where you were."

"Well Sir, I was recently packed off to that Corporation, because my boss thought I was not earning my salary. I find it is very humiliating. I am going to see the Minister with the entire Committee of Management and demand that I be restored to my legitimate place. After all Government has accepted that Union officials should not be transferred. Am I correct?"

"I confess I am not aware of the intricacies of Union management. You should know better. Anyway I insist that you should see the Minister and get back. I wish you all luck."

Marzipan seemed to be in a pensive mood today. Obviously the transfer had affected him rather severely. "George, you look so different today. Why?"

"I am emotionally disturbed."
"George, do not take life so

seriously. You have taken your transfer very badly. You see George never take yourself seriously. Malcolm Muggeridge once said 'If on judgement day, I was confronted with God and I found that God took himself seriously. I would ask to be sent to that other place.' So cheer up and tell me what have you been doing with yourself these days".

"I was at Meth Medura last week".

"Yes—I know that place too. I have been there myself."

"Good—then we are again on the same wavelength! What impressed me most was that, what all religions teach is being practised there. Its an oasis in a world of hate, violence, jealousy and what not we find all around us. You feel spiritually uplifted. Do you agree?" "Yes I do, completely" I said.

"Go on George, please" I urged him.

"I was reminded of that famous prayer of St. Francis of Assisi which many people frame and hang up on their walls for others to see, but never practice. In Meth Medura it is practised—at least everyone endeavours to do so. In the presence of the people working there and participating in their activities, I felt so unworthy to call myself a human being". At this stage George pulled out his note book. He turned over the pages.

"Have you heard of Leon Uris."

"Yes, I have. In fact I have read most of his books" I said. "Listen Sir, what Uris has written in QBVII. I copied it down because it moved me deeply. You won't believe it, after reading that passage, I kept away from all work for one week to contemplate upon what Uris had said" "But, Marzipan, you are always away from work". "Forgive me, I am quite serious, now. Please listen. This is what I have copied."

George rose, held out his note book, and started reading "There is a moment in human experience when one's life no longer makes sense when it is directed to the mutilation and destruction of fellow man. There is a demarcation line of morality beyond which no man can cross and still claim membership in the human race."

We were both silent. I had read this myself earlier and was surprised that the light hearted Union man, George Marzipan, could be affected by such noble thoughts.

"Marzipan, did I not tell you that I am proud to be your friend. So many people want immorality, but none of them know what to do on a Sunday afternoon. Why can't they get out of their homes and spend a little time with the deprived, with those who do not know what it is to have even a decent meal. We should all learn, George, to light candles and not curse the darkness. I have been to some places close by, where the people live in the sludge and slime of poverty. It is time that something meaningful is done for fellow man. Meth Medura is doing precisely that, Marzipan. And I am so happy you spent some time there and temporarily at least took leave of your Union problems."

"I have already written to the Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya, whose headquarters is Meth Medura, that in my retirement I would be a voluntary worker. I just cannot give up employment right now because of my family responsibilities. I have sired 8 children and I must provide for them."

"Good—that is why you also thought of the Seminar on Family Planning." I said lightly, because the talk was disturbing, and both of us felt that we were looking into a mirror and recognising our own infirmities and ostentation in a world of want and squalor.

"Yes, you are right, but I had thought of Family Planning long before I went to Meth Medura. I shall call over at your office to discuss this matter further. I have made some headway—but this transfer to the Corporation of the Unemployed has upset the applecart. It would have been better if it had been styled Corporation of the Underemployed. Anyway, I shall be seeing the Minister and all should be well. The politician as much easier to deal with than the bureaucrat. I am absolutely certain the Minister will give me and my Committee of Management a very patient hearing and order my transfer back to where I belong." said George. "I, agree, George, see the Minister soon, very soon, and let me know what happened. I will be ready with your cuppa—if necessary, with adequate notice, I will be happy to entertain anyone else whom you care to bring along." We parted.

+ +

BOOK REVIEWS

● Tipu Sultan Of Mysore

History writing in modern times has assumed a highly technical and professional character that it has become the preserve of a small coterie of men. The history that is presented in such works does not retain the fire of the past; it only shows the ashes of the past. Such writings have therefore left a great mass of people who are yearning for a proper understanding and knowledge of history beyond the periphery.

Viewed from the standpoint of historians their task is also conditioned by several factors, foremost amongst them being the

non-availability of Source materials in any one place, lack of acquaintance with foreign languages in which source materials were written, time factor and finally the financial resources that they can command to complete their research. The absence of anyone of these facilities perforce makes historians to rely on published materials and sources that are easily available in popular libraries and archives. These in turn have a pernicious influence on the writers who sometimes carry the prejudices and distortions of their original and secondary sources into their own writings. This appears to be the rule and not the exception of the historiography of the British period of Indian history. As the English pioneered the writing of modern Indian history and were in a position to "flood the book market", with their own history books, the true image of several Indian kings have been lost to posterity. It is only in recent times that Indians started writing history from their point of view and this writing also appears to suffer from post-independence euphoria. The pendulum has swung to the other side and it will take sometime before it comes to the centre. This is also true of many other South Asian countries including Sri Lanka. Until such time they achieve political and economic stability they are bound to hark back on the colonial past which will certainly colour their vision and perception.

While "Britain today remembers its recent empire, the largest in history, with more bewilderment than regret". India which was the back-bone of that Empire remembers its past with disgust and regret. The popular image created and portrayed by historians about Indian kings, especially of Tipu Sultan has inflicted severe strains on the recent Indian history. His picture was that of a ferocious

and blood thirsty tyrant that the English mothers scared their naughty children with his name. The valiant and heroic defence organised and led by Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan to maintain the independence of the Kingdom of Mysore, in the midst of threats from Maratha Peshawar and Nizams, and in the face of veteran British generals of the American War of Independence (Lord Cornwallis who became the governor-general in 1786 was the general who surrendered Yorktown to the forces of American war of Independence) and future Duke of Wellington (Arthur Wellesley) and the seasoned fighters like the Regiment de Meuron, had received only scant attention. This is the essence of the subject matter of Tipu Sultan.

The book is presented in the form of a historical novel as the author felt that history will be a "poor medium to recapture in our imagination all that Tipu had lived and died for". An additional reason being that it must be viewed by a larger audience. However, this reader feels that author's statements are misleading. Because his book is ninety percent history and only ten percent novel and the book has more claims to be treated as a book of history than a novel.

The author appears to have spent nearly thirteen years in collecting materials for his work and had practically consulted all that is available on the subject. In his voyage of discovery or treasure hunt as he would prefer to have it, he has visited many institutions and collected materials in the libraries and archives of India, England, Scotland and France. He has obtained Dutch records, Offoman archives and Iranian papers relating to Tipu Sultan. Of these the author makes special mention of the Archives Nationale and Biblio-

theque Nationale and Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères which yielded some of the most valuable papers and documents. Such an array of source materials themselves speak for the quality of the work. Having laboured for so long only the author realises the enormous task that confronts a historian, and comes to his defense much against his own prejudices. "Often I had wondered why Indian authors had failed to come forward to correct many distortions and contradictions planted in our history by hostile, motivated or misguided commentators. Now I came to realize that the cost, effort and time that it takes is normally far beyond the resources of individual authors—howsoever dedicated—and until someone comes up with a proper, rational scheme, our history will hold neither truth, nor inspiration for the coming generations. The task of correctly representing our history, I appreciate is colossal, but then all the more reason for beginning earlier than late or never."

The book contains seventy seven chapters and divided into five main parts. The chapter division is not always perfect and in certain instances a page is devoted for a chapter. The first four parts deals with the establishment of Hyder Ali's rule in Mysore to the accession of his son Tipu Sultan. Part five which is exclusively devoted to Tipu Sultan covers more than one half of the book.

The first four parts provides the necessary background to Tipu Sultan's rule. Nevertheless it is important in that it throws insight into the political set up of Mysore and circumstances under which Hyder Ali came to assume full control of the State. It gives life to the popular view that Hyder Ali was usurper who super-imposed muslim rule over Mysore. Few

people are aware that the Hindu Maharajahs of Mysore had already resigned the administration of this Kingdom to two brothers—Deoraj and Nanjeraj—Chief Ministers of the Kingdom and it was with the blessing of Nanjeraj that Hyder Ali was able to climb up the ladder. If not for the timely intervention of Hyder Ali, Mysore State would have been dismembered by the Marathas, Nizam and English. Even under Hyder Ali and later under Tipu Sultan, it was the Hindus like Puranja and Krishna Rao, especially the former were the confidantes and men behind the throne of Mysore. The establishment of Hyder Ali's dynasty was no more alien than the enthronement of Nayakkar dynasty in Kandy (Sri Lanka). It should be admitted that the author in his anxiety to jump to the reign of Tipu Sultan had not made it clear that Hyder Ali had better claims to rule Mysore as an Indian than any other foreigner.

Part five covers the reign of Tipu Sultan from 1783-1799. Tipu Sultan had already become a formidable foe to reckon with and the English after the death of Hyder Ali intensified their campaign against Tipu and met with several reverses. There were also other reasons for escalating the campaigns. The British have lost their hold in America (1783) (an event many will be surprised to know Tipu himself celebrated with a salute of 108 guns p. 208.) and was bent on building up another in India to compensate for what they have lost. In the eye of the British, Mysore seemed a centre of anti-British intrigue which might culminate in alliances from Cape Comorin to Afghanistan. And of course there was the traditional French connection with Mysore.

None of the wars in which English confronted Tipu could be said to have been precipitated by him. But still myth lingers on that it

was Tipu's approaches to Napoleon and the French General Malartic in the Isle of France (Mauritius) that caused the final rupture and fall of Mysore. Napoleon's reply to Tipu had never reached his hand. In the latter case, Tipu sent only a commercial delegation to the Isle of France. Readers are told that before this delegation could reach Port Louis, Lord Wellesley's agent Coll Agnew had gone and obtained a promise from French general to implicate the delegation in a military alliance. Having got the promise from the French General in 1798, Lord Wellesley used this as an excuse in 1799, nearly an year after to wage a war against Tipu. The motive was not far to seek. The fall of Tipu was hailed by the British historian and fooled the people to believe that what was restored was the Hindu rule over the State of Mysore, in the same way Brongrigg got rid of Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe of Kandy and justified his action by the Kandyan Convention of 1815. Both these kingdoms fell prey to the British largely due to internal dissensions and treachery of its generals and chiefs. Nowhere one sees strong parallels as in the case of Tipu Sultan and Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe. Of course in the latter case there was no semblance of the restoration of anything traditional. The historians who contributed to Cambridge Modern History vol. IX and Cambridge History of India Vol. V still perpetuate the theory that the British resorted Hindu Rule in Mysore by getting rid of Tipu a Muslim who took "delight to enforce on his subjects and his vanquished foes the honour of Islam. Sir John A. R. Marnot the historian of Imperial Britain condones the actions of Lord Wellesley and refuses to accept the historians verdict on the whole proceedings leading to the fall of Mysore as mere burlesque.

Chapters 42 and 45 are the best pieces in this part of the book. They help to study the administrative ability of Sultan. He had his eyes and ears in the social, economic and religious problems of the state. The proclamations, decrees and notes of addresses made by Tipu, as given in Chapter 45 show that even minute problems engaged his attention. It was an accepted principle in those days that victors had the right to loot and plunder the vanquished but not Tipu. "Looting" he said, "a conquered enemy enriches a few, impoverishes the nation and dishonours the entire army. Wars must be linked to battle fields. Do not carry it to innocent civilians. However their women, respect their religions and protect their children and infirm" (p. 221). In a circular to his Amilders he impressed upon them that agriculture was the life blood of the nation and it should be encouraged at every instance with governmental assistance. He advocated that peasants should be given each advances to buy their ploughs, tax concessions to all those who engaged themselves in the cultivation of non-traditional crops like sugar cane, betel and coconut and encouraged the planting of mangoe trees and alike. He took special care to protect the wanton destruction of teak, sandal and other useful timber (p. 228) prohibited the distilling and vending liquor for local consumption. Licences were allowed for sale of liquor to foreigners only (p. 225) on the most sensitive issue of religion, much against the advise of a foreign Mulavi Tipu like his father Hyder Ali was not a religious bigot. He was a patron of Sri Ranganatha temple which was situated within the fort of Seringapatam. The author has made every attempt to show that his religious and social policy was governed by the early religious training he received from his Mulavi and Brahmin teachers, and more

recently acquired through the literature he obtained from France.

Such a rehabilitation is also necessary in the case of Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe of Kandyan Kingdom. For a long time now scholars have depended on the folklore, and the documents drafted by Brownrigg and D'Oyly as the best source material for the study of the last king of Kandy. However, recent researches appears to have taken the right turn to enthrone Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe. The themes developed in the two recent articles, "The Sinhala-Buddhist Identity and the Nayakka Dynasty in the Politics of the Kingdom of Kandy, 1739-1815" — K. N. O. Dharmadasa and "The Alien King Naykhar on the throne of Kandy — H. L. Senewiratne (The Ceylon Journal of Historical and social studies new Series Vol. vi - No. 1) if carried to their conclusions will go a long way to place the image of Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe in correct perspective much to the chagrin of the historians who followed Brownrigg and D'Oyly and other English writers.

The book contains enough material to stimulate further research and students of history will certainly find the book useful for their study, through it is presented in a "novel" form.

K. Arumainayagam

16-7-78

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● Jeronis Pieris

Michael Roberts *Facets of Modern Ceylon History through the Letters of Jeronis Pieris*, Colombo, Hansa Publications, Ltd. 1975, pp ii, 108, 16 plates, 2 charts, map—Rs. 25.00

Traditional servitors of the Muse Clio have trod for the most part the straight and narrow path of documentary rectitude in their attempt to chart the changing

tides of history. In recent times this time-honoured path has been criss-crossed by a new wave of techniques which use tools from sociology, economics, demography, political science, anthropology and law to fashion ever new forms of historical writing, as well as leaning increasingly on hitherto neglected documentary sources from various strata of the evolving socio-political frame. Since Dr. Michael Roberts, one of the most distinguished of the new generation of Sri Lankan historians has shown already, both in his published work, that he recognises the significance of this multidisciplinary and more expansive way in which the study of history should proceed, one takes up *Facets of Modern Ceylon history through the letters of Jeronis Pieris* with great expectations. But what emerges from the delayed entrance of the twenty three paltry and lightweight letters of a God-fearing young Low-Country Sinhalese arrack renter in Kandyan territory in the middle of the nineteenth century sadly belies the scope and dimensions of what the stage-setting title promises.

Jeronis Pieris does not stand out as a particularly distinguished dummy, despite all Dr. Roberts' strenuous and elaborate window-dressing, on which to drape the various 'facets' of the economic and social history of the period, and the earnestly debated, though sometimes controversial and speculative, theses which form the meat of the book have little, if any, relevance or substantial link to the meagre and fragmentary personal trivia which dominate the Moratuwa born trader and potential plantation owner's epistles between 1853 and 1856. The author however places a very high value indeed on these "unique" letters to underpin his main arguments and to insure his more impetuous

speculations, and the grand design is thus spelled out in his Preface: "The main object in reproducing these letters has been that of making them more widely available to scholars and of providing interested laymen with some insights into developments in mid-nineteenth century Ceylon." At the same time, I have used the information and the insights supplied by the letters to illumine certain facets of nineteenth century Ceylonese history by developing some of my own findings and theories. In brief, the letters have been variously used—at times as a point of departure for the investigation of various subjects on which they throw some light, and at other times as a convenient show-case in which to display conclusions fashioned for the most part of other evidence." These letters merit some examination, therefore, for "the several insights they afford" in the editor's words.

Hannadige Jeronis Pieris was stationed in Kandy at the age of 24 in a managerial capacity by the two De Soysa brothers to plant their properties in Hanguranketa, Haragama and Kadugannawa and farm their arrack rents. The 23 extant letters exhibited date only from 30th October 1853 to 12 June 1856, as his scriptorial talents apparently faded three days before his 27th birthday, or were superseded by greater demands on his hard-pressed time when he married Caroline Francisca Soysa on 13th December 1856. This is a great pity as he went on before he died in his 66th year in 1894 to display considerable commercial panache and had become one of the most affluent Ceylonese entrepreneurs and property owners amassing, over 6,500 acres in coffee, coconut, tea, rubber and cinnamon. His personal correspondence after the age of 27 in the perspective of his voracious capitalistic forays

would, perhaps, have provided more grist for Dr. Robert's mill and a greater justification for the pattern of his book. No explanation for this curious blank is offered however. Their absence or disappearance is all the more strange as during the brief period of his early letters he laid great store by personal correspondence and advised C. H. de Soysa in his second letter (Nov. 24, 1853): "I suppose you will find a safe place for my letters in your box—preserve them—as I do take much care of yours—They might be of use to us some time after." (p.63). He was also in the habit of making rubbings of all the letters he wrote from Kandy on an Indian ink press-copying machine, and it is not in fact the originals of the 23 letters "in a continuous series" that have survived, but the copies reproduced on "water-thin tissue paper" which Dr. Roberts edits for his purposes. Even in these extant versions portions are torn, omitted, obliterated or indecipherable, and repeated readings of them only reinforce the impression of an inconsequence and flatness which the humdrum and artificial style does nothing to relieve. Since the decision to edit and publish these letters was influenced by the hope that it would prod owners of similar documents into revealing their existence, it is to be wished that this subsidiary aim will be achieved in significant fashion.

Of the mixed bag of 23 letters, 7 each are to two schoolboys, Charles Henry de Soysa (his 17-year old nephew-in-law) and Louis Pieris (his 13 year old brother) and contain an amalgam of domestic trivia, and personal title-tattle, exhortations to Louis to strive to cultivate his English and attend to his studies, confessions as to his own literary tastes which depended greatly on a diet of Samuel Johnson and Joseph Addison, and

stray comments on the scene around him as he commuted between Hanguranketa and the Arrack Godown in Kandy. Flights of any sort of emotion are rare—on viewing "the odoriferous snow-like blossoms of the coffee-trees", chastising the marital mores of the "barbarous" Kandyans, an unaccustomed sortie on foot in the mountainous jungle of a coffee estate when their guide "endeavoured to hurt" a frightened deer appropriately enough "with his bill hook" (sic) and in the final letter to a Mr. W. H. Wright where Jeronis's christian sentiments well over with some freedom. A brief letter to a Mr. George Pride, a wealthy British planter in Upper Hewaheta, reveals the correct Oriental obsequiousness which was a sure passport to fame and fortune, and the rest are commonplace notes to S. C. Perera, Simon Perera and Marcellus Perera in Colombo and Johannes Salgado in Moratuwa. One cannot help remarking that despite the obvious pains he took to cultivate his own English and his constant admonitions to his brother to watch his grammar and "spell your words correctly" he was not the most exemplary of instructors ("middle" for medal being the worst faux pas in the spelling line) and on one occasion even spelled his brother's name as "Lewis". The odd man out in the collection is the last and unnumbered letter written in Sinhalese from London to his sister and mother over 21 years after his last letter in English, of which an English translation is also provided. The passage of time and good fortune certainly did nothing to improve either his powers of observation or his style. As a facimile of the first of his English letters is provided, one wishes that the only specimen of his Sinhala hand would have similarly been available for inspection.

These then are the rare material ("a unique historical source") which the editor exploits and builds upon to enhance his major contribution as the author in the first part of the book, consisting of 57 pages.

It is in the seven chapters of this section that Dr. Roberts sets out to furnish the reader with the results of his painstaking researches into certain 'facets' of the encounter between the colonial presence and the native upper class on the make. The foundations of social dominance within the indigenous society and the processes of social change and elite formation, the entrepreneurial spirit of the new merchant class, the spread of Western education and the accompanying Anglicisation, the erosion of traditional customs, values and attitudes among the indigent elites, and their role as props for the colonial power structure, the events leading to the Kandyan Marriage Ordinance of 1859, the conflict between the demands of the coffee plantations and the claims to village land, and the effects of the intrusion of a large-scale plantation economy on the traditional rural community and its cattle and buffalo population in the Kandyan highlands are the main strands in the story. These aspects are sandwiched between an opening assessment of the various kinds of source material available to the historian of 19th century Sri Lanka, and a brief epilogue in which some views on the current state and future directions of historiography in the British period are advanced.

The author lays bare with his customary deftness and versatility the origins and evolution of the comprador bourgeois class during this period through the accumulation of capital from government perquisites and salaries, and through primary trading ventures

and the farming of arrack and toddy rents. In imitation, later, of their British masters, they opened coconut and rubber plantations and began profitable enterprises as merchants. "The new class and urban life developed together, and surplus wealth and the new plantation technology began to assault and corrode the traditional feudal structure and its agrarian economy, while the rising spirit of commerce and the concomitant aggrandisement, infected by an aggressive Christianity, gradually infiltrated extensive regions of social life and metamorphosed deeply personal ties and Eastern values and perceptions into commercial bonds. Throughout his analysis of this process which began well before the middle of the nineteenth century and continued strongly into the twentieth, Dr. Roberts weaves the family saga of the Hannadige Pierises and the Wasusahannadige de Soysa, stalwarts of this early Low Country phase of Sinhalese capitalism, the ideology of the movement being succinctly expressed in James Pieries's paean before the Ceylon Social Reform Society General Meeting on 11 January 1908; "Most of us are planters. Our interests are in many respects identical with those of the planters. It is true that many of them have shown us the way and they deserve the credit for having brought capital into the country and shown us the path along which we may all win prosperity. We have followed in their footsteps and our interests are now the same. The interests of the Ceylonese planters are identical with those of the European planters." (*Ceylon National Review*, No. 5 Feb. 1908 p.169).

Dr. Robert's most controversial chapters are five and six in which he tries to suggest respectively that the expansion of the coffee plantations was not at the ex-

pense of forest, chena and pasture land essential to the Kandyan village ecology, and that the development of plantation properties and the Crown Lands Encroachment legislation were not specially injurious, to traditional practice and the cattle and buffalo population. In both lines of inquiry highly selective data and peripheral evidence are used to buttress tentative arguments, and in the latter "veritable gems of information" from one single letter of Jeronis to his by then 14 year old brother (No. 12) are relied upon to shed doubt on the status of the draught animal in the highland village economy before the middle of the 19th century. These are mined from a random observation: "The agriculture of these mountain-like paddy fields, if I may so call them, is not conducted by the bullock, nor the muddy parts by the buffalo, but are tilled all over by the hoe—differently shaped from that in use among us; except in a few instances when the fields are situated between hills or two ranges of hills and consequently sufficiently level to be worked on by the buffalo, I have never seen them use bullocks in ploughing." These chance remarks on a mode of Upcountry paddy cultivation following on the usual pleas to Louis to better his English style are seized upon by Dr. Roberts to lend wings to his particular hobby horse that the buffalo was not an integral part of the Kandyan village economy before the thirst for coffee and the Crown lands 'enclosure' movement began to make inroads into the warp and woof of rural society. Jeronis was writing about "the paddy lands round about Kandy", and he was naturally familiar with these in the mountainous Hangu-ranketa district in which the most intricate tracery and terraced fields, perhaps anywhere in the hill coun-

try, as in other places, is to be found, and where neither the buffalo nor the bullock can be put to much use. In this, as in other places, the author tends to ignore more basic facts of regional peculiarities in the vast extent of land comprising the highlands of Sri Lanka, and also fails to appreciate or even recognise the existence of many variables in the technological, socio-cultural and economic spheres. His knowledge of traditional agricultural practices is also open to question. Similarly the scorched earth policy in Uva-Wellassa and murrain are not sufficiently tenable hypotheses for the diminution of the cattle population. He confines his attention in the main to the restricted period of the coffee boom, and tends to advance and apply these to a much broader period. He will have to produce more trenchant and consistent evidence if he is to sustain his line that traditional land use and village community structures were little affected by the encroachment of coffee, tea, rubber and coconut over a long period of time as well as to dispute the view that, although expropriation under the Waste Lands Ordinance may not have been done *en masse*, a great deal of village land changed hands in various ways in the climate of uncertainty, and even panic, provoked by official land policy, as well as the prevailing land rush. It is not possible in the space of a brief review to take up all the slack in the author's presentation, but his claim for the acceptability of other sorts of historical source material is far from convincingly enough asserted in the course of the present investigation.

A most opulent and eloquent facet in the book is the series of sixteen plates interspersed at intervals through the text which

afford a fascinating glimpse into the splendidly upholstered milieu of the new commercial elite spawned by British modes of mercantile activity. This album of family photographs is a veritable portrait gallery of bourgeois Anglophilic prototypes of a vanished era in which the congealing arts of the studio photographer froze for all time, in the proper Victorian attitudes of arch primness and starched pomposity, the strictly tailored lineaments of an "aristocracy" envisaged in Thomas Babington Macaulay's historic "Minute" of 2 February 1835: "a class of people who can act as intermediaries between us and the millions we govern; English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and intellect." Hannadige Jeronis Pieris and his kinsmen appear studious exponents of the life-style of that alienated native bourgeoisie which the British created, nourished and later exploited for their own survival even up to the present day. As a late twentieth century "showcase" for nineteenth century ancestral blooms, Dr. Roberts does both families proud in his book.

Further valuable components are two genealogical charts of the Pieris and de Soysa clans, a map of the Hanguranketa-Kandy-Kadugannawa localities, a list of Jeronis Pieris's cash crop plantation properties, and a translation of a petition presented by some Kandyan chiefs calling for reform of their marriage customs in late 1858. There are also a bibliography of works cited and a very full and helpful index. A major and prominent feature of the text is the impressive cavalcade of footnotes which march across substantial areas of each page and literally dazzle the reader with the meticulous pageantry of the researcher's art, besides offering a rich peranara of elitist Ceylonese names, and what another reviewer has described

as "Senior Common Room personalities." The main Preface dated "June 1970" has two subsidiary postscripts dated January 1973 and "October 1974" explaining delays in publication, and there is a note on "Spelling". The book is well printed and bound in cloth boards with a fetching dust jacket from which the venerable, though kindly visage of the biographee confronts us in blown-up sepia-tone, and is exceedingly good value at 25 rupees.

Despite its shortcomings, Dr. Robert's work is an important contribution to continuing studies on the historiography of the colonial relationship in nineteenth century Sri Lanka, and serves as an impressive case-study of the British "civilising mission". He throws out stimulating clues and supplies provocative leads into re-assessing and evaluating the cultural factors in Victorian imperialism and the land policies of the British raj as they affected the Kandyan rural structure. But it is doubtful whether the life and letters of Jeronis Pieris on the view in the book, despite his environment being appraised synoptically and with much adroitness and resource, were really worth focussing upon in the context of his time. In the hope that Dr. Roberts has cut his teeth in an absorbing new historical vein with this spirited exercise, one awaits his further ventures into elite formation processes and the ideology and politics of nationalism in the British period with a greatly sharpened interest.

H. A. I. Gunatilleke



IS IT STILL A MYSTERY?

Singing Fish Of Batticaloa

K. Kanapathipillai B.A., F.R.G.S.

Any Foreigner paying a visit to Sri Lanka should not fail to see for himself the Eastern coast of Ceylon with its costal lagoons, bays, inlets and river valleys, fringed as it is at certain spots with coral reefs, mangrove swamps, vast stretches of paddy fields and coconut groves. A visitor to this lovely home of the Tamils and the Muslims, Portuguese Burghers and the Sinhalese, will be amply rewarded by the presence of some rare subjects for deep study and careful investigation and research. Tradition has it that this is the original home of the oldest race of people of whom this Island may justly be said to be their home. The Veddahs and the Kuravar have been inhabiting this land from time immemorial and a very rare phenomenon of nature, the Singing Fish of Batticaloa is to be found here.

The coastal back-water, called the Batticaloa lagoon, stretches from North to South and in one-inch topo-sheet, resembles very much an irregular blue ribbon with a frayed margin. It is about forty miles long and about a couple of miles wide at its broadest point. The island of Pulliyantivu is situated at a point where the lagoon enters the Bay of Bengal at a distance of about three miles from the Town of Batticaloa. The mouth of the lagoon is very often blocked by a dune of sand known as the 'Bar' and this happens during years of insufficient rainfall. Otherwise the mouth of the lagoon is kept open and the influence of the tide is felt to an appreciable extent in the lagoon especially during

the time of full-moon. The old Dutch Fort is situated at the eastern extremity of the Island of Puliyantivu, and about a half mile from the old jetty which is now in ruins and lying to the east of it, is a prominent land mark, a rock smooth and rounded, which gives the appearance of an elephant standing knee-deep in water, called the Elephant Rock.

On a clear still moon-light night when the lagoon has not been rendered turbid by flood water, and when the water is crystal clear and is of a sparkling turquoise blue, if a person ventures into the lagoon in a boat and rows in the direction of the Elephant Rock and steadies his boat at any spot between the Kallady Bridge and the Elephant Rock or just stands on the Kallady bridge and listens intently, he will become all of a sudden aware of some croaking notes coming from the bottom of the lagoon. If he persists in his attempt to capture the notes and applies one end of his ear to his oar and dips its other end in the water, he will be able to hear some sharp and some flat notes that resemble very much the sound one gets by carelessly thumbing the strings of an old type Japanese Mandoline. May be the sounds resemble those of an Aeolian harp. Ting-tong; Tong-ting; krr-krr... thus go the notes in a gamut. The phenomenon is not necessarily obtained on a clear moon-light night, but it is distinctly audible especially after ten O'clock when the night is still and the other sounds have subsided and a perfect calm prevails; and it may be heard through out the night, till about five in the morning. Rev. Fr. Lange has recorded the notes and has even represented them in musical notation.

What is the secret of this rare phenomenon of nature? Sir James Emerson Tennent was of opinion that these notes were caused by

some species of shell-fish. But Dr. George Buist commenting on this theory of Sir James clearly made out that musical fishes do exist in abundance, and that the subject merited careful investigation. He says: "As it is very difficult to conceive in what way the sounds are made under water, it would be well to have the subject more minutely inquired into" (Proceeding of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Journal Vol-III Pxl). The same phenomenon has been observed in a salt water creek near Bombay at Vizagapatnam on the Coromandel Coast and off the mouth of a river in Borneo. 'A lake in the Northern part of Australia, according to Mr. Searey boasted a similar phenomenon!

Mr. Stanley Greene, a planter who was at Thirukovil, has been making a careful study of the subject on several occasions over a period of ten years when he was in charge of a motor boat service in the Batticaloa Lake and observes "I can state without any exaggeration that I have heard the Singing Fish many scores of times when sitting in the cabin of one or other of my boats with the greatest ease and distinctness, both during the day and night, and I found that if I applied my ear to the gunwale of the boat the sound becomes so loud as to be almost startling". He was able to hear this sound in most parts of the Batticaloa lagoon from Batticaloa up to Mannunai.

Mr. Fowler says that it is hardly within the bounds of possibility that the sounds are caused by Fish ("Times of Ceylon 27.8.1917").

It has been my experience and that of many others like Mr. Stanley Greene and Mr. E. G. Boulenger who have paid considerable attention to the unravelling of mysteries of this nature, that there are some fish, especially lagoon fish otherwise known as estuarine

fish, which are capable of making some sound or other when caught and brought to the surface. A fish called in Tamil the 'Kili Meen' (Parrot fish) makes a sharp screening note like a parrot when it is taken out of water. The sound, to all intents and purposes, appears to have been made by the gills, for it may be noted that when the gills open and close the sound is emitted. The sound may have been produced, as Mr. E. G. Boulenger observes, by the expulsion of the air from the swim bladder. Even fish like the 'Pearl Spot', 'Otti' (Tamil) and 'Ora' (Tamil) balloon fish and cat fish also make sharp clicking muffled cries and grunts and barks when they are taken out of the water. In the shallow lagoon at Karativu, I have observed and noted with interest the rasping sound made by the fish on nights when the sand bar was kept open and the ponded water allowed to flow into the sea. Those notes were emitted by the 'Parrot Fish', the 'Balloon Fish' and the 'Pearl spot.' Many a time I have heard the fish gasp and croak and bark and grunt when taken out of the water and held in the hand.

Dr. Grant is of opinion that the clinking sounds are produced by a species of univalve, the Tritonia, but the theory that the Singing Fish of Batticaloa is a species of Tritonia has not much evidence to support it. Mr. Stanley Green's theory that sounds are produced by fish by means of their gills and not by mollusca finds considerable support from Mr. E. G. Boulenger's account of the 'Singing Fish' given in his 'Animal Ways'—(Ward Lock & Co. 1931—P. 172). He says: "Although most fish are deaf a number are able to produce sounds often of sufficient volume to be appreciated at a considerable distance. Fish, being without true lungs or larynxes, may be dumb

by mammalian, avian or even amphibian standards, but they become audible in a variety of ways. Many for instance, when brought to the surface, emit loud groans, and gasps merely by the expulsion of air from the swim bladder. Others habitually produce sounds whilst deep under water, and these have been the subject of much superstition from the earliest times.

A common toad-fish of the Florida reefs can be remarkably noisy emitting at intervals a deep 'Kung Kung' which when uttered by many in concert has a distinctly musical quality. More remarkable still, however are the efforts of the so-called Mexican Singing Fish or Canary Fish (*Porichthys Notatus*) which barks, groans and wails in choirs of some hundred strong. The noise is largely emitted whilst feeding and is mellowed to a pleasing murmur as it filters up through the water to the listener in a boat. A single individual of this fish can make itself heard through the thick glass of an aquarium tank at 10 yards distance.

The drummer fish of the coasts of Florida and New Jersey has huge calcareous plates in the throat, and these, when brought together, produce loud booming sounds comparable to a drum. The sounds are apparently entirely accidental and in most cases the singers are unconscious of their efforts."

From what has been said, it would appear that the mystery associated with the so called Singing Fish of the Batticaloa lagoon is gradually being unravelled and that the sum total of the evidence so far obtained with regard to the capability of fish to sing, weighs heavily in favour of the somewhat uncanny and yet reliable notion that fish do croak and grunt, and gasp and bark, and click and boom, that is to say they produce sounds

in 'concert which when emitted and filtered through the circumambient watery world get mellowed into very soft murmurs producing a musical effect.

Although the evidence that has so far accumulated goes very much in favour of the theory, that some fish do sing and although most fish which are denizens of the Batticaloa Lagoon and of other coastal inlets and backwaters and 'Kapilappuvas' like the Pannichankerny Valaichenai lagoons, have been heard to produce gasping sounds and grunts and barks and rasps when brought to the surface; it is yet an open question whether fish and fish alone make the concerted chorus in the Batticaloa lagoon, whether they make the sound by the movement of their gills or forcing out of air from their swim bladders and whether such sounds as are produced do float up to the surface in a mellowed musical chorus.

The subject, it must be admitted still persists in remaining a mystery and needs further, fuller and more detailed and careful investigation. At this stage it must be noted that there is a body of opinion led by Mr. Pearson that the sounds may have been produced by the bottom current of water flowing either through some empty shells or over a pebbly bed. This subject has yet to be fully investigated. By a process of elimination and careful shifting of evidence and investigations, it may be possible in course of time, not merely to locate the areas where the sounds are heard but to single out and say with certainty that this and this alone is the cause. If those Phenomenon which are singled out happen to be fish, it may be possible at this stage to isolate such fish or fishes in aquaria and make careful observations as to the manner in which the sounds are emitted

and conducted to the surface. I admit that the subject is still a profound one and that it still persists in being shrouded in a veil of mystery, and that it successfully defies one's attempt to unravel it.

* * *

BOOKS FOR THE PEOPLE

Public Libraries And The Community

by A Special Correspondent

Knowledge is power. "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest" wrote Benjamin Franklin. Such investment can be in educational institutions which will include schools, universities, research institutions and of course libraries. The subject of this article is in respect of Public Libraries which are open to members of the public. These are run by local government authorities, viz; Municipal Councils, Urban Councils, Town Councils and Village Councils. Other libraries which are open to the public fall outside the scope of this article. Libraries are no new phenomenon. "The earliest civilisations, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek and Roman, all found it necessary to preserve and organise their recorded thoughts and experiences through the medium of libraries of one kind or another".(1)

In Sri Lanka there is a high rate of school attendance within the age group 5-14. The school attendance within this age group has been placed around 75%. The heavy student drop-out is between 15-24 and this phenomenon is associated with the search for employment(2). It is this group that should be a major concern of our society. Failure to do so will create individuals who are

disoriented. Lack of concern will spawn violence and criminals. Dr. Karl Menningen has written "Not all crimes by all criminals behind bars will exceed on totality the social crimes committed against them by Society."

Man's thirst for knowledge is insatiable. He needs a place to quench this thirst. He is in search of the elusive Elysium. Thus, public libraries run by local authorities assume a very important dimension. They cater to that segment of the community that is deprived. This is observable if one cares to walk into any public library, even the modest ones in a village in a rural outpost. Here books are hard to come by and schooling generally ends at primary level. Thereafter the children are at a loose end. Therefore it is the inescapable duty of the State to provide more libraries where these children can satisfy their thirst for knowledge. The better forgotten insurgency of April 1971 may never have taken place, if greater attention had been paid to the school drop-outs. Limited accommodation in schools and universities is an impediment to their meaningful existence. However we need not be alarmed or disheartened. This trend has been noted elsewhere as well. The University of Rome was built by Mussolini in the 1930s for 30,000 students. Today more than 150,000 students are enrolled. A social science professor remarked "This isn't a University—it is a madhouse" *Newsweek* of 22.05.76.

I have only attempted to make the point that while schools and universities in our country, Sri Lanka, are fighting to save themselves from falling apart in the face of severe constraints, other institutions should step in to ease the pressure. One way is to provide a wide network of good libraries throughout the country and this

is precisely what the local government authorities are doing. The purpose of this article is to focus attention on this subject; to create an awareness of the pressing need and to stimulate the interest of public spirited citizens in this country in this subject of encompassing national interest.

The written word. (3) Knowledge is communicated in so many different ways. The best and most widely accepted is through the written word. Let us see how this development proceeded through the centuries. The primitive method was by way of signs. For instance if a person wanted to barter a deer, he would use his fingers to indicate the number. Possibly, if the number exceeded the ten fingers, the transaction would have taken the form of a herd or heap or pile, depending on the object of the transaction. In fact most of the ancient number systems used a base of ten, probably because most people first learned to count the fingers of their two hands. Path finding was through the North Pole Star which scarcely changes its position. Hunters and travellers depended on this Star.

The earliest written numbers were reported to have been used in Egypt and Mesopotamia about 5000 BC. Strange as it may seem, while an ancient civilisation flourished in ancient Egypt during this period, a similar rich civilisation grew in the land then called Mesopotamia. This land lay nearly 1000 miles east of the River Nile and between the rivers Tigris and the Euphrates which emptied into the Persian Gulf. Historians have referred to this civilisation at different periods as Sumerian, Chaldean, Assyrian and Babylonian. By about 2000 BC, priests in these lands had built temple libraries where they recorded their knowledge in a secret script which none else could understand. This pro-

pensity to keep knowledge to themselves is true in our own country. For instance, has anyone been able to prepare the oils and paints that adorn the Sigiriya frescoes? Else why was an expert invited from Italy to undo the damage that had been done to these national treasures? Our indigenous medical knowledge quite often dies with its practitioners. The writer himself was struck down with Poliomyelitis nearly 50 years ago and was restored to life and normal health by an ayurvedic physician. He would be called a quack in the age of Salk and Sabin. His knowledge presumably died with him. There are many reasons for this proclivity, but that is outside the scope of this article. Why such knowledge cannot be preserved in our libraries is a question that has agitated my mind for years. What, however, should be borne in mind is that even as far back as 2000 BC the functional value of libraries had been recognised.

The written numbers used in Egypt were indicated by chipping notches on wood or stone. Three thousands years later the Romans still made strokes to indicate numbers. It is reported that the people of China also used strokes while the Mayas of Central America, who were completely cut off from the civilisations of the Old World, could write any number with the help of only three signs—a dot, a stroke and a kind of oval. For their records of dates, the Mayas used special numerals shaped like human faces.

The abacus, a counting frame, was used in most of the civilised lands of that period and was also used in ancient Rome. The abacus tablets were baked in the sun, but those used by the Romans in ancient Rome were made of metal. It is of interest to note that among thousands of clay tablets which archaeologists unearthed from a

temple Library near the banks of the Euphrates these abaci were found. The pre-eminent position occupied by Libraries as repositories of knowledge even at that time is further fortified by this discovery. Libraries, thus, appear to have been the automatic first preference to preserve knowledge for posterity.

The Phoenicians lived along the coast of Syria, the land which the Bible refers to as Phoenicia whose ports were Tyre and Sidon. These people spoke a language somewhat akin to Hebrew and were among the earliest people to use a new sort of writing. The Phoenicians used an alphabet made up of a few simple signs which stand for sounds. About 600 BC the Greeks adapted these to suit their own different language. Thereafter it was an easy matter to master the art of writing. The Written Word was no longer a secret.

About 3,500 years ago, when the great pyramids were already very old, an Egyptian scribe named Ahmes had enunciated a rule about the area of a circle in writing. This papyrus manuscript written by Ahmes himself is in the British Museum Library carefully framed and preserved. Scattered in museum Libraries all over the world there are other early manuscripts. The written word is for ever.

Early Libraries and Librarians. The earliest library as we understand libraries now was the Plato's Academy, set up in 385 BC. Aristotle's Lyceum was born in 336 BC while the School of Epicurus came into being in 306 BC. Alexander the Great for whom an epitaph read "A tomb now suffices for him for whom the world was not sufficient" had conquered Egypt by 332 BC. The City of Alexandria, built on his orders, became the chief seat of learning in the Mediterranean. Alexandria is also stated to have had an unsurpassed Library

of scrolls. The First Ptolemy who succeeded Alexander established the Museum Library of Alexandria in 300 BC. According to Frank Atkinson "The ancient library at Alexandria was sacked as also the European monastic libraries during the Dark Ages" (4). Prof. Raymond Irwin pays massive tribute to the four Ptolemies thus "rarely has there been a succession of four monarchs prepared to devote their revenues as lavishly as the Ptolemies to the cause of library research".

The first subscription library in the USA is stated to have been started in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin. This was the Library Company of Philadelphia and was reported to be intended to meet the need of books felt by a debating society he had started earlier. This library was later administered as a free library. According to K. C. Harrison, the Chetham Library in Manchester, dating from the 17th century, was one of the forerunners of the modern public library. In Britain, the modern public library maintained by local authorities from proceeds of taxation was scarcely known before 1850, when the first Public Libraries Act was passed that year. The passage of this Act in Parliament was largely due to the efforts of three men—William Ewart, MP. Joseph Brotherton, MP and Edward Edwards, an assistant in the British Museum. (6) The subsequent Public Libraries Act of 1892 marked a definite, progressive and helpful trend. When Gaius Asinius Pollio founded the first public library in Italy some 2000 years ago, Pliny wrote that by doing so, Asinius Pollio "made the works of genius the property of the public." (7)

Some of the earliest librarians were among the most outstanding and brilliant of men of that time. To name a few: (7a)

Leland and William of Malmesbury of England—Leland was an

antiquary while William was a historian.

Leibnitz—a brilliant mathematician and philosopher of Germany. Callimachus—classical poet.

Eurates—brilliant mathematician who taught in the schools set up by Alexander the Great.

Prof. Irwin also speaks of Henry Bradshaw of Cambridge and Thomas Watts of the British Museum of more recent vintage who had the "uncanny knack of spotting a book in the dark like a homing pigeon, once a book passed through their hands"

Library tradition in our own country can be traced to very ancient times. In an article published by Ishvari Corea, Chief Librarian, Colombo Municipal Council and included in the book *Libraries and the People*, also edited by her, Ishvari writes "Sri Lanka has an ancient history and an ancient library tradition. The history of libraries goes back to about the third century BC following the growth of a religious literature and the writing of the commentaries in the language of the people. These *Privenas* (abode of monks) became the repositories of old leaf manuscripts and holy books were taken, cared for and "kept safe in the libraries attached to the viharas. Most of the temples of today have libraries of old leaf manuscripts and still serve the needs of the Buddhist scholar." Incidentally, in so far as this country is concerned, it seems to me that this book edited by Ishvari Corea will be a valuable addition to any library—in any case every librarian should read the articles in it. (g)

Funding for Development of Libraries. Unquestionably, inadequate financial support has been a serious constraint as far as public libraries in Sri Lanka have been concerned; this will be referred to later. The unswerving dedication of the four Ptolemies

to the cause of libraries has already been placed on record.

In highly developed countries, central governments need not ordinarily exert much influence on the development of public libraries which remain the function of local authorities. In developing countries, however, central governments take a more direct interest. It is happening in our own country. Generous outright cash grants are given to local bodies to construct their library buildings. Even the smallest unit of local government administration, the Village Council, continues to be the beneficiary of such money grants. Without this assistance, these local bodies with negligible independent sources of revenues will never be able to construct even a reading room. Therefore the Department of Local Government which administers this scheme deserves the thanks of the people for this laudable programme.

While no doubt it is a delightful experience to see small, beautiful buildings with the words *Public Library* prominently displayed, it is somewhat of an anti-climax when one walks in to find the essential component of a library—books totally inadequate. No one can be blamed. I should imagine that it is lack of funds, and absence of an integrated approach to this subject that contributes to this very unfortunate handicap. The Party Report (which will be referred to in due course) seems to provide one answer—there are many other ways of meeting this situation, but that too is outside the scope of this discussion.

Philanthropy no doubt continued to play a major part. "The British Museum Library was started in 1753 when the Crown acquired the books and manuscripts of Sir Hans Sloane a rich physician who died that year. George IV presented his father's library to the nation"

(9). In Britain and in the USA, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, generous donations from wealthy philanthropists contributed in very large measure to their development. Frank Atkinson has written that Passmore Edwards and Andrew Carnegie are two persons who made generous contributions. Carnegie died in 1919, but by that time he is reported to have provided 380 Library buildings in Britain and 1700 in the USA (10). According to Harrison "Andrew Carnegie interested himself much in public libraries and in 1879 offered £ 8,000 towards the establishment of one in his home town of Dunfermline. In 1913 Carnegie set up the Carnegie UK Trust which continued to encourage and support public libraries." (11)

References

1. Libraries in Britain—K. C. Harrison.
2. Socio-economic survey of Sri Lanka 1969/70—Vol. 1—page (ii)
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4. Librarianship—Frank Atkinson.
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LETTER

Discipline – The Greatest Need

Sir,

Apart from TRUTH which suffered greatly during the previous regime thanks to the SLBC and the State controlled Press, an equally heavy toll was taken of Discipline.

If the late Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike is acclaimed as the father of

the SOCIAL REVOLUTION in this country in 1956 he must also be held responsible for the INDISCIPLINE that has become part of the way of life. While rightly stressing the rights and privileges of the common man, no emphasis was placed on the responsibilities of these men towards their country and their fellow beings. The 'APE ANDUWA' mentality has bred self centred and selfish men and women with a callous disregard for the sensibilities of their fellow men.

Subsequent Governments since 1960 have nurtured this indiscipline for the sake of political expediency and compromises have been made which have further undermined the moral fabric of the citizens of this land. THE BRIBERY CORRUPTION and NEPOTISM that one sees today was born of this indiscipline and all these have been and are being condoned by the powers that be when the 'doer' is of the correct hue!

When in July 1977 the voters gave an overwhelming mandate to the present government it did so in the fervent hope that the countries moral fabric would be rid of all the stains of corruption etc. We are fast approaching 365 days in power and this hope still remains a HOPE.

No lofty ideals or sanctified sentiments will restore the well being of this lovely and blessed country without the institution (enforcement, if necessary) of discipline at ALL LEVELS. WHILE FREEDOM is precious and should be jealously guarded, the freedom of the wild ass for citizens of a country within a social framework is untenable.

The Government must not lose any further time in directing its energies towards the restoration of discipline in this country. It will not cost anything; there is no foreign exchange involved! But it will pay massive dividends!

Anxious

Colombo.

1.7.78

ACID BOMB EXPLOSION—10

Chapter Ten

Gunapala—"There'll Be Trouble Soon...."

by James Goonewardene

The Story So Far

Deva, an England-returned artist, failed to get a response from the art world of Sri Lanka. He found himself a job as an Art Master in a Maha Vidyalaya in a remote area by the sea. The Principal, Piyaratne, is a figure from the old world of Sri Lanka's educational system, while Ariya, the manager of the local resthouse with whom Deva has struck up a friendship, is sensitive to the disturbing realities, even the underground trends, swelling up in the country at this time. In a discussion after Deva's appointment, Ariya reveals that he was perturbed about many strange things that have happened in the neighbourhood recently. Deva gives up his rooms in Colombo and asks his brother, a highly successful money-spinning architect to look after his collection of unsold sculptures. The brother, aghast at the thought that Deva should waste his talents in a rural village school, offers him money to enable him to go back to London to resume his career as a sculptor and regain his former popularity, wealth and success. Deva refuses because he has no desire to escape to London and what the world regards as fame. Before leaving Colombo finally for the village, Deva wanted to contact an old friend who though an important bureaucrat, was a kindly man. In the government office where he had worked he found a strange new atmosphere where the newly elevated peon and a revolutionary sounding clerk told him that his friend had been thrown as a reactionary. With his ties with the old world he had known snapping, Deva turned to the village. Back in the village, Deva looks for a lodging as he does not want to stay in the school hostel. He cannot afford the resthouse. His friend Ariya, the resthouse keeper, found him a room in the house of the village sub-postmaster whose wife was a school mistress. In the first day at school he learnt a little more about Piyaratne, the Principal. He met another teacher in the new who treated fire and thunder against imperialists and colonialists and spoke of socialism. Deva, trying to settle down, has a frightening and terrifying vision of his wife who had died in England. Later, whilst fishing he makes the acquaintance of an old and interesting character, Uda Kande Baas. Saturdays are free days and Deva looked forward to relaxation and a chat with Ariya. This Saturday, he found Ariya in turmoil. One of his waiters had stolen money and had disappeared. Before going to the police, Ariya and Deva learnt of a secret organisation to which the waiter in question, like many others, had contributed money regularly every month. Police begin investigations and a temple in the village is referred to with trepidation.

Deva's landlady knocked on his door one afternoon. In the time he had been a boarder she and her husband, the tubby little sub-postmaster had kept out of his way. They had never had a boarder before—it was an entirely

new experience for them. But, more than that—there was a barrier that existed between themselves and him. They called him mahataya; and that, in itself indicated a distinction they drew between themselves. An educated city man was

an enigmatic sort of person who needed careful handling. He had a style and manner of life that they were not accustomed to. The sophisticated world of the city had come into their household. They didn't mind it really. They were town folk too, but small town folk—just the two of them now—their two grown up daughters having married and moved to another town—there were just themselves, moving on fixed rails within a framework of custom and tradition that was unalterable. In their little world everything had its place. Any attempt to change it brought the curse of the gods. City folk were of a different breed. They had the licence to do things that villagers dare not do. They came from a stranger world. The security of the village was the important thing. So it was why they would drag everyone down to the level of the rest. They, however, wished their own children to become as good as city folk. It was different with children. Children had a right to get on in life. They did not see the least contradiction in this. There was a conflict in their religious beliefs too, but that didn't worry them either. They observed poya day rituals and practised folk cults with the same devotion. They helped in the preparation of an exorcism ceremony and offered poojas to Hindu gods, and observed in a very diluted form, a kind of ancestor worship—that way they combined primitive folk practises and advanced Buddhist beliefs without the least feelings of contradiction or distinction, mixing the two with the deftness of a juggler tossing balls into the air. They were totally creatures of their environment, and they were happy and contented within it and resisted change.

It was different with this city-bred mahataya who was as different from them as a pedigreed

cat was from the nondescript thing that dozed by the hearth of a village hut. Their boarder ate the same things they ate, talked the same language with, perhaps, a little difference in intonation and did everything else in fact as well as they did them, but they felt a difference. He generated vibrations that were different from those they had known and had a frequency that was subtler and more sensitively organised than any they had felt before.

She stood there and started to hem and haw when he opened the door. "You are... busy, maybe," she said bashfully.

"I can come later, if you..."

"I am free now," he said. "It's all right."

"It's about a matter that concerns a friend of mine."

"Yes?"

"She came last evening and told me she wanted to see you about her son, a boy called Gunapala who goes to the school you teach at—he has already talked to you about his paintings—you may remember that."

"Gunapala," he said, "Yes, I know him". He remembered the boy—an intense looking, dark skinned young man with short hair, dressed in a pair of shorts who nervously stopped him outside the class one morning and said he wanted to talk to him. He couldn't, for a moment, quite get out what he wanted to say—standing there stuttering nervously, but eventually managing to bring the words out he told him that he painted. He wanted to show him some of his work and Deva agreed to look at them; next day he had brought his paintings along—just two of them. The incident had left a curious impression.

"What does she want to see me about?"

"He is causing them a bit of worry—they do not know what to

do about it."

"What is that that causes them this worry?"

"They are not certain even of this. They only know that something's troubling the young man—which he does not wish to divulge. They are concerned about him. His recent behaviour has got them disturbed even more. The trouble seems to be that he goes his own way not caring how much worry he causes them."

"About what time does your friend want to come?"

"About five, if it suits you—she lives in the village, about three miles out of town."

The two women came along at the appointed time, and the landlady knocked; when he emerged they stood back and gawked bashfully at him—the weaving instructor standing back a bit, peasant-like and awkward—a lean, middle-aged woman with glossy blue black hair with streaks of grey in it.

"You tell him about it while I go and make some tea for you," said the landlady.

Deva turned round and looked for chairs to sit on. "We can talk better if we can be seated," he said turning to the two chairs standing on the two sides of the doorway.

"My son," she began and paused. "I don't know how to tell you about all this—it's all mixed up. He goes to the vidyalaya, as you know."

"Yes, I know that."

"He's not really a difficult boy—hasn't given me or his father any real trouble—did not go wild like some boys are inclined to do nowadays—but it's his indifference to his studies that has got us worried. He doesn't pay the least attention to it. We always hoped he'll take an interest in his studies and get somewhere in life. The other boys have done well, at least, some of them in this village have—their parents didn't want them stuck

here in this wilderness just farmers, like everyone else has been or mat weavers or cinnamon peelers or drummers or something else—that was good for our fathers and our forefathers—these days everyone tries to get an education for their children."

"The paintings your son showed me were good—he has talent, of that there is no doubt," said Deva.

"He told me you liked them. This is the first time anyone has seen his work and showed an interest in them. There was a change in the boy afterwards. He took a new interest in his paintings. Of course we were always unhappy that he should neglect his studies in order to paint. We now feared he would neglect his studies even more—after this interest you showed in his work. What can a young man do in life who has only learned to paint? This is our worry. He's an intelligent lad. If he put his heart into his studies he would do as well as any other boy. Only he has no interest in any of that. It's this painting business that's taken his fancy."

"What does he do when you find fault with him?"

"Of course, he flies into a temper—and that's terrible. He begins to say things that hurt us. He talks of the ignorance and stupidity and superstition of us villagers. He just goes on raving saying there was no hope for villagers who worshipped spirits and offered poojas to non-existent devatavas. When people are sick, you don't take them to a proper hospital—instead you take them to an ignorant yakdessa and asked him to beat his drums and burn incense and do wild dances and chant like veddho. You see he has strange ideas. They are so strange it made some of the village folk think he was not right in his head."

Deva understood, something that he had grappled with without result, and now suddenly it

all seemed to become clear. Unconsciously Sophy Hamy had put her finger on the cause for a good bit of the splits and divisiveness and conflict there was in a village community.

"Its about him—our boy Gunapala I've come now to see you about. Our difficulty is just this. We don't know what to do."

"The difficulty then is that he neglects his studies and thinks village folk are ignorant", he said.

"Yes, that is what it amounts to."

"From what you say, I am convinced that he is an intelligent boy. He's no fool—of that we can be certain."

"Oh, no, he's not a fool."

"But is he right to think that village folk are ignorant and refuse to change."

"Life everywhere has changed—that you'll agree?"

"Yes, that is true."

"Life change has changed a very great deal—even in villages and towns such as this. It is all different from what it was ten or twenty years ago—people have increased in number and they are all turning to different types of livelihood, but the customs and practices haven't changed. They are still the same, and the students in the schools are being taught modern science, modern ways of life and thinking, and more of them are learning about life in other parts of the world—and they don't know why it is people practise things like exorcism when there are hospitals. Their heads whirl like windmills as a result, and anybody can come and turn their heads any way they want."

"But people are like that," she said. "The older folk—how can they change—they are too old for that. Inborn trait will not be rid even with a ball ceremony, is a saying amongst us. A parent crab walking sideways cannot ask its young to walk differently."

"But its one of the reasons why the youth are getting all worked up. Its different from the old days when boys stayed confined to the village and rarely went further than, perhaps, the next village—all that has changed. They know a great deal more these days." "I understand that," she replied, "but what can the older folk do? They can't change. They knew a different sort of life, and these new fangled ideas are like things fallen from the sky. Some of them even think that all the trouble comes from giving an education to village boys. Its education that has turned their heads, they say. Gunapala's father and I don't agree with this kind of talk; but the older folk continue to grumble."

"What help then do you expect from me?"

"We would like you to tell us if any good can come from this boy's madness. If you talk with him, maybe. It will be of help—will it be any good your seeing the rest of his paintings?"

"Oh, yes, that would be a most important thing to do—let me see all of his work."

"We can get him to bring them to you, but it is such a distance for you to come."

"The day after tomorrow is Saturday. If you tell me how to get to your house I shall come on Saturday, if you think that's advisable."

"Oh, it would help a lot if you can do this. I'll send Gunapala to show you the way. It isn't far—only three miles. We are simple folk and live in a simple house. We shall give you such hospitality as there is."

Saturday morning was like any other morning. At nine Gunapala called as expected. He was as nervous as before but held himself in check like a high strung heifer being hitched to a cart. His wide, dark eyes peered from under his brows like the eyes of a frightened

night bird. He had a fine line of jaw and shape of head, and the skeletal structure of his body was well-proportioned and was sparsely covered as nervous, intelligent youth generally are. He seemed full of excitement although nervous. The prospect of having his teacher who had practised his art in a great metropolitan centre, look at his work had filled him with anticipation and excitement. Yet before he met Deva he had only contempt for teachers and had made no attempt, Deva had learned, to disguise this.

They arrived at the house, a small, squat, red tiled structure with blue windows. On the edge of a gravel road, across which was a marsh full of mana grass and salvinia from which a pond heron suddenly took off at their approach. There was a bit of empty land around, overgrown with scrub and small trees. In between the trees and the scrub one caught glimpses of other houses and wattle and daub huts from which came the sound of human voices and barking dogs. There was life around. The pressure of a growing population however, was still unfelt here.

Gunapala's family were awaiting his arrival as if for an important dignitary—simple, village folk waiting for their son's guru—a tradition bound household—the father, a tall, darkish man, his mother and behind them his sister, a well-filled and attractive young woman. He soon felt himself engulfed by the family all moving round him and giving him the attention they customarily reserved for the priest of the local temple, offering him refreshments and making a fuss over him; they offered him oil cakes and other home made sweet-meats which the mother urged Deva to take freely. When he could take no more the sister brought him a drink of a popular brand of mineral water on a plastic

tray and held it out to him with long, beautifully moulded and tapering hands; to be in such close proximity to her made his pulse take a leap. She stood in the doorway and stared at him afterwards.

At last when the refreshments were over Gunapala brought his paintings for Deva's inspection. They were propped up on chairs. Deva took his time, going from one to the other, studying each in turn. There were no tricks here, no struggle for effect. It was the work of a young man who had an instinct for giving expression to an obsessive idea through a medium he appeared to understand only partially now. The talent was original and the paintings were all done with ingredients and paints that the mask makers used and were all done on hard board or anything else that had been available.

Most of the paintings were concerned with evil spirits and exorcism ceremonies. There was a fierce energy in the mask dancers and the drummers; and the evil represented by the masks was more elemental and alive. Deva realised that Gunapala had been attempting to portray all these as being crude, barbarous and belonging to an undeveloped people who still continued to practise ancient cults and believed even in ancestor worship. He gave all this a touch of wildness and fierceness as one would do if he was painting a stone-age people dancing before a jungle fire in front of a rock cave. It was just as his mother had told him.

One of the paintings Deva picked up and looked at for a longer time was of an exorcism ceremony behind which loomed a large image of the Buddha hidden as if in a mist and dominating both the dance and the picture—the serenity of the Buddha contrasting with the wildness of the dance. It was as if he had been trying to declare that here was a truth that was

greater than the animistic cults. Yet this was just one painting in which he had attempted this. Something had pushed the Buddha out of his mind, something that had tortured him and twisted his mind. "This painting," he said, turning to Gunapala "did you do it before the others?"

"Before the others," replied the lad "Why doesn't the Buddha appear again?" There was no answer from the boy.

"Why don't you speak?" said the father.

"Yes, speak up," urged his mother. "Don't stand there as if struck dumb."

The silence lengthened out. "It's like that sometimes," said Deva. "Some things you do you don't know why you do them."

The boy needed help. It was an up-hill task, but it was necessary to do it. Deva had seen what there was to see—the boy's sense for colours and the skill for using them had come from someone—the mask makers, perhaps—there was a tradition of mask making in the region—it was, perhaps, from them he had learnt his skills.

He turned to the parents then and tried to divert them and himself by talking of a less weighty matter; he talked of mask dancers and the tradition of mask dancing in the area. He felt the need, at the moment, to talk thus, to distract himself from the problem of the boy and the presence of his sister whose beauty was quite striking, he realised. He was struck by the long, black eyes, the fullness of her mouth and the fine, smooth brow. He turned to Gunapala.

"Do you want to go on painting?" Once more there was no answer, and he waited, and he could see the old couple shift uneasily in their seats. It was as if they felt he was going to abort the stratagem they had resorted to by bringing him home.

"Yes, do you?" he repeated.

"It doesn't matter what I do," replied the lad.

"At first you were interested, you were even anxious to show them to me—your paintings—and you have done all this".

"I was interested—but it has all changed now—it doesn't matter now. There's going to be trouble soon—it doesn't matter what you do".

"What trouble is there going to be?"

Deva looked at the parents as he said this and observed how frozen their faces had become as if they had known that this was how it was going to be—his eyes drifted in his sister's direction and was shocked to see the expression of sudden desparation on her face. He turned to the boy again;

"But you like to paint—you have painted all this and you don't want to continue—why?"

"It will all come to nothing."

"Why will it come to nothing?"

There was silence again.

"Yes, why?"

"We are village boys—sons of farmers; there's no future for farmer's sons—only the rich have the good things in life." Deva suddenly felt the futility of the task. The boy, for some strange reason, had suddenly set his face against his own future. There was some other reason at the back of his which he was unwilling to tell them. Yet it was not all lost, but this thing had to be sorted out by themselves—the family had to do it, not he. There was nothing more he could do. Maybe the boy would change his mind and come to him and until then he must

"Well," he said rising. "I must go now. If Gunapala changes his mind he can still come to me. I am willing to give whatever help I can, but it is he who must make up his mind."

They saw him out to the door, but silently as if all their hopes had collapsed round them.

Confidentially

The Imported Meat Racket

IS IT NOT A FACT that Elephant House (Ceylon Cold Stores Ltd.) issued a price list on July 21 to household customers about the imported meat produce the Company will sell to those who have the money to buy the same? That there are six items mentioned on the list? That for the record (and posterity) it would be useful to set out in full what Elephant House (E.H.) has to offer? (1) AUSTRALIAN BONELESS BEEF. Pure boneless beef from specially bred Australian cattle. Packed in Polythene bags. Each bag contains 900 grams (2 lb. pack) (now available) at Rs. 9.00 per lb. (2) AUSTRALIAN CURRY LAMB: Curry meat from Australian lamb inclusive of bone from fore shank packed in polythene bags. Each bag contains 450 grams. (available—late July) at Rs. 10.00 per lb. (3) AUSTRALIAN AMERICAN BROILER CHICKEN: Australian/American quality Broilers. Weight between 2-3½ lbs. Each broiler is packed in a polythene bag, (available—Mid August) at Rs. 13.25 per lb. (4) AMERICAN CURRY HENS: American Curry Hens. Weight 2-3½ lbs. Packed individually in polythene bags. (available—Mid August) Rs. at 11.50 per lb. (5) NEW ZEALAND CURRY MUTTON. Curry meat inclusive of bone from quality New Zealand mutton carcasses. Packed in polythene bags. Each bag contains 450 grams. at Rs. 10.50 per lb. (6) NEW ZEALAND CARCASS MUTTON: Whole carcass mutton from New Zealand, at Rs. 15 per lb. IS IT ALSO NOT A FACT that very large orders had been placed by private firms as well as by the CWE for imported meat? That the *Sunday Obs-*

erver of July 2, 1978, had reported that "large orders for the import of frozen beef, lamb, mutton and chicken from Australia, New Zealand and Sweden have been placed by two well known Colombo firms: a spokesman for one of the firms, a leader in the frozen food business in the country said his company had placed orders for 650,000 pounds and the first shipment was expected in mid-July: 'that the meat would cost a little more than at present but the consumer is assured of the highest quality', he said: the other importer, a leading Department Store in Colombo, said that they had an order for 6½ tons of frozen beef which was due this month: the two companies were busy preparing their cold rooms to receive the meat: they said there was reduction of duty on meat imports and the stocks now on order 'will be sold at a fair price....'?" That all this was very nice and comforting to the folks who have the money to pay these prices and the importers who will make their pile? That it is a totally different story for the local producers of meat and broilers who have for years been starved of cattle and poultry food at reasonable prices and who were at the same time compelled to sell beef and mutton at "controlled prices" which were unrealistic in the context of the nonavailability and the high prices of cattle and poultry food? That it is in this setting that one must view the drama (or tragic melodrama) that has unfolded itself in Sri Lanka? That Act one Scene one was a pathetic, weak and factually incorrect advertisement by Elephant House to justify wholesale reduction of import tariff, on imported meat and the need to import such meat and chicken flesh? That *Tribune* pricked this bubble and it was followed by onslaught from the National Livestock Development Board (NLDB)

—especially in regard to some matters pertaining to Victoria Farm? That Elephant House did not attempt to answer the queries raised though answers, at least on factual matters, were called for? That Elephant House, having won the first round, won the second round also when tariffs were removed allegedly in the interests of the consumer (and not the importers who will grab vast profits) and now tons of imported beef, mutton, lamb and chicken have started cascading into the country? That it will be recalled that it was at a late stage—a little time before the Elephant House Manifesto to import frozen meat was published—that local producers were offered incentives by Elephant House to increase production by increasing their purchase prices for local meat and chicken flesh? That it is said that within a short time of this offer local producers had responded and supplies had started rolling into the cold rooms of Elephant House? That the story going the rounds is that the cold rooms of EH have recently become fairly full as a result of the higher prices offered to local producers? That if this is correct was there any need to abolish tariffs and permit the import of frozen meat and chicken? That the Ministry of Trade would do well to look into this aspect of the matter? That it is unlikely that EH will dispose of its present stocks of local produce below purchase price in order to make room for imported stocks? That there is a suspicion in knowledgeable circles that EH will soon drop their prices to local producers in order to preserve and enlarge imports? That unless the Government steps in with more realistic import policies in the matter of frozen produce, *Tribune* forecasts a gloomy future for local producers?

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