

CEYLON GENERAL ELECTION

1956



I. D. S. WEERAWARDANA

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by

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University of Ceylon



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Also by I. D. S. Weerawardana

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PREFACE

Democracy is still young in Asia. Because of its youth there is considerable vigour and exuberance ; because of its comparative novelty there is both optimism and pessimism ; because of its relative strangeness both fear and hope.

Many seek to test the success of Asian Democracy by applying the standards of the more mature and stable western states. Yet Asian countries are still struggling to be nations. Their progress towards nationhood is still bewildered and confused and it is no easy task to choose a steady course through the welter of different culture-patterns, heterogeneous economic levels, conflicting modes of conduct and antagonistic economic, social, linguistic and religious communities.

This book on the General Election in Ceylon of 1956 has therefore not been written in the manner of a purely psephological study following the distinguished efforts of Nuffield College. My aim has been partly to tell the story of an Asian general election and partly to relate that story to the conflicting and sometimes confusing web of a complex and heterogeneous society.

This study is largely based on an analysis of election literature, the national and party press, other ancillary literature and the replies sent by candidates to my questionnaires. It was not possible to supplement the general picture that evolved from it by intensive case studies. It was not even possible to supplement it by a small-scale opinion survey.

With all its limitations this study would not have been made possible but for the generous assistance I received from all quarters. I am obliged to the University of Ceylon for sponsoring this study, and for financial and secretarial assistance. I received the full co-operation of the national press and the goodwill of all the political parties.

I am deeply grateful to the many candidates who answered my questionnaires and to those public-spirited citizens who voluntarily supplied information available to them. I wish to express my sincere thanks and my deep sense of gratitude to my students in the University who collected election literature, interviewed candidates and wrote reports on the campaign in various constituencies. I wish to make special mention of Miss S. Ariacutty and Miss G. Cumaraswamy who read and analysed Tamil election literature; Sir Ukwatte Jayasundera, General Secretary, U.N.P. and Mr. Leslie Goonewardene, General Secretary, L.S.S.P., who gave me interviews; Sir Ivor Jennings, who read the entire manuscript and gave me the benefit of his criticisms; Dr. A. J. Wilson for reading the sections on the Tamil campaign; Lankadipa, Dinamina and the Ceylon Observer for permission to include their cartoons; Mr. Sepala Gunasena, Mr. M. D. Sirisena and Mr. Benedict Silva for their invaluable cooperation; Mr. F. R. Jayasuriya, Mr. M. J. Peiera, Dr. T. Vimalananda and Mr. H. J. Balmond for their encouragement and my wife for her patient assistance during the last three years when I was working on this book. It is needless to add that for the judgements and opinions expressed in this book I alone am responsible.

I. D. S. W.

11th December, 1959,
University of Ceylon,
Peradeniya.

NOTES ON ABBREVIATIONS

Parties

U.N.P.	: United National Party
M.E.P.	: Mahajana Eksath Peramuna
S.L.F.P.	: Sri Lanka Freedom Party
L.S.S.P.	: Lanka Sama Samaja Party
V.L.S.S.P.	: Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party
C.P.	: Communist Party
F.P.	: Federal Party
T.C.	: Tamil Congress
L.P.	: Labour Party

Papers

C.D.N.	: Ceylon Daily News
C.O.	: Ceylon Observer
T. of C.	: Times of Ceylon
M.T.	: Morning Times
L.	: Lankadipa
D.	: Dinamina

Provinces

W.P.	: Western Province
S.P.	: Southern Province
C.P.	: Central Province
N.P.	: Northern Province
E.P.	: Eastern Province
N.W.P.	: North-Western Province
N.C.P.	: North-Central Province
Uva	: Uva Province
Sabaragamu- wa	: Sabaragamuwa Province

Miscellaneous

E.B.P.	: Eksath Bhikku Peramuna
B.C.R.	: Buddhist Commission Report
N.C.C.	: National Christian Council
C.N.B.	: Christian News Bulletin.

A number of references mention the name of a constituency or party with a serial number thus: Colombo Central 2. This means a pamphlet distributed in Colombo Central and numbered 2 in the file of Colombo Central Constituency pamphlets deposited with the Library of the University of Ceylon. The names of the 89 constituencies are given in Appendix III.

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

On Thursday, the 30th of September 1954, the Prime Minister, Sir John Kotelawala, declared that provision would be made in the constitution to give parity of status to Sinhalese and Tamil as the official languages of the country. Sir John was speaking in Jaffna during his official tour of the Northern province. This declaration was undoubtedly a turning point in the language movement in the country and one of a series of vital events which ultimately led to the early dissolution of Parliament. It was, however, not made without a cause. For over a century English had been the "official language" of Ceylon for, when the British established their dominion over Ceylon, they made English the language of administration. The advent of universal franchise and the introduction of a measure of popular government in 1931 coincided with the first beginnings of a language problem. Even after a century of English as the language of administration and of higher education, over 90% of the people knew no English. With universal franchise, the irony of the situation where the people did not know the language in which they were ruled came to be gradually appreciated. Even so this realisation came slowly. The small measure of this realisation can be gauged from the fact that in 1935 the maximum language demand of the newly formed socialistic Lanka Sama Samaja Party consisted in seeking permission

to make police entries in the vernacular. Though small in beginning, it showed the direction that the language movement was likely to take. Specifically it was only a demand for the substitution of the vernacular for English in a narrow sphere of administration. It was, however, more importantly a demand informed by a desire for equality. Since then, the gradual substitution of the vernacular for English has been the policy of almost all radical groups.

It soon became clear that the implementation of swabasha ^a in administration had to be preceded by the introduction of swabasha in the educational sphere, especially in those schools which supplied the administrative staff and in the higher educational institutions. Although the administrative aspect was never forgotten, the emphasis of the language movement therefore soon shifted to the educational sphere. Indeed in 1943 a motion that Sinhalese should be made the official language of Ceylon was moved in the State Council. It was amended to include Tamil also before the motion was finally passed in 1944. Resolutions of the State Council however had no binding effect on the executive, and in any case so long as Britain ruled Ceylon the subject was merely academic. ^b In the educational sphere, however, some progress was made because the

^a Swabasha means "self-language." In the current usage it can mean either one national language or national languages in the plural.

^b There is no evidence that the Governor would have refused the Royal assent to a Bill providing for greater use of Sinhalese and Tamil. Yet it is extremely unlikely that he would have agreed to a substitution of Swabasha for English.

swabasha demand found support in educational theory and the measure of popular government then available permitted its implementation.

With the achievement of Independence, the language movement gathered much momentum. Firstly when a start had been made in the educational sphere, it generated its own motive force. Children educated in the vernacular medium in one class could not easily be introduced to the English medium in the next. Secondly the withdrawal of British power removed the one insuperable obstacle. Thirdly in the two decades since 1935, the swabasha movement had taken on an economic dimension as well.

In the earlier years of British rule, as a matter of practice, the higher administrative posts were filled by recruitment from Britain, and the few fee-levying English medium schools in the country supplied the lower grade officers. In course of time higher offices became available to Ceylonese with an English education. Thus English which was available, by and large, only to the well-to-do, became the avenue to employment in the public service, except of course in the manual and equivalent grades. In course of time the public service became the chief source of employment for the Ceylonese, because there was no other industry which could absorb the increasing population. The only major industry, i.e. the plantations of tea and rubber, required a large army of semi-skilled workers and few executives. Immigrants

from India filled the worker jobs and British personnel many of the executive posts. The public service also became the most lucrative because the salary scales of the public service were fixed with a view to attracting officers from Britain and not on a basis corresponding to the local standard of living. However, from about the second half of the 19th century, while the greater part of the educational vote was spent on English education, a large number of non-fee levying vernacular schools was also run both by the government and by religious denominations. These were the cinderella of the educational system. No higher education was provided through the swabasha media so that education through the vernacular was almost a blind alley.

The demand for the implementation of swabasha in the schools was an attempt to remove this disparity and to prevent the enjoyment of privileges by the small minority which could afford an English education. Thus the vernacular educated intelligentsia, i.e. the vernacular school teachers, ayurvedic doctors and Buddhist priests gave leadership to the swabasha movement. From the beginning the swabasha movement was an uphill struggle against the power, privileges and prestige of those who believed that education should be through the English medium. At each stage in the progress of the movement, various objections : technical, economic and other were raised. The intensity of the opposition also increased with the arrival of swabasha at progressively

higher levels of education. As a result, the swabasha movement had to make itself stronger politically and emotionally if this opposition was to be overcome. By 1954, swabasha had reached the pre-G.C.E. level in education and the fight was on even before the end of that year for the continuation of the principle to the G.C.E. level in 1955.

As the movement reached this point the problem took on a new dimension. Education through swabasha meant education through Sinhalese and Tamil. When the movement reached the G.C.E. level it was clear that certain grades of the public service (such as clerical grades) would have to be recruited from those who had received their education in Sinhalese or Tamil. Since seven out of the nine provinces of Ceylon are Sinhalese-speaking this would have had the effect of limiting Tamil opportunities to two comparatively less developed provinces unless Tamils learnt Sinhalese. ^a On the other hand with the advantage of the early establishment of a number of English medium missionary schools in the north, Tamils had secured about 30% of employment in public service, because the language of administration was English. Their leading professional men practised through the medium of English in Sinhalese-speaking areas and their leading businessmen were concentrated in and around Colombo.

^a The Northern and Eastern provinces are regarded as the Tamil-speaking provinces. Their population in 1953 was 832,142 as against a total Sinhalese population of 5,621,332.

Thus the progressive implementation of swabasha in the educational sphere, after a point, appeared as a threat to the existing interests of English-educated Tamils. The position was clearly put by Mr. C. Suntharalingam^a in August 1955. "If the language of examinations for recruitment to the public services is either Sinhalese or Tamil only," he said, "the practical result of the policy would be.....that for services in what are now said to be Sinhalese-speaking areas in Ceylon, Sinhalese candidates will be recruited and for the so-called Tamil-speaking areas Tamils or Muslims. This means that there will be discrimination on linguistic grounds for recruitment to the public services."¹ In these circumstances Tamil leaders had two alternative courses to follow. They could defend English as the language of education and administration. In the climate of opinion in the 1950's such a course would have appeared as reactionary and Tamil political leaders found it increasingly difficult to do so. In the alternative they could demand that both Sinhalese and Tamil should be made the operative and official languages throughout the country. Now it must be stated that governmental policy since 1944 was to replace English with Sinhalese and Tamil. Yet the point had not been canvassed in the country as to whether they were to operate jointly throughout the country or whether Sinhalese was to operate in Sinhalese-speaking areas and Tamil in Tamil-speaking areas.

^a Mr. Suntharalingam M.P. for Vavuniya for many years. One of the leading Tamil public men.

From 1954 onwards this new aspect of the problem came to be discussed even though from the fringes of the language movement. The same forces that spear-headed the swabasha fight against English in the immediately previous years were the nurseries for germinating thought on this new aspect. Since the swabasha fight of the previous decade had been predominantly led by Sinhalese, the latter also began to suggest that there should be only one official language for the country and that it should be Sinhalese.

Such ideas were not left unchallenged. A leading member of the L.S.S.P. is reported to have said in August 1954 that both Sinhalese and Tamil should be made official languages even though some were demanding that only Sinhalese should be so made.² The debate went on though on a minor scale. In September 1954, a body called the Sinhala Jatika Sangamaya^a was reported to be collecting signatures for a petition demanding that Sinhala only be made the official language.³ A week later a Tamil leader, Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam,^b criticised the Kotelawala Government as communal in contrast with the late Mr. D. S. Senanayake's and Dudley Senanayake's Governments, and urged the Tamils not to support Sir John's Government.⁴

^a Sinhalese National Association.

^b Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam, leading Tamil political personality. Member of the State Council since 1936. MP since 1940. Leader of the Tamil Congress and the author of the political formula of "fifty-fifty."

Mr. Ponnambalam's criticism of the Kotelawala Government can be fully appreciated only in terms of Mr. Ponnambalam's political record in the previous decade. Mr. Ponnambalam was the leader of the Tamil Congress which strongly pressed for the principle of "fifty-fifty" when in 1944 the Soulbury Commission was collecting evidence for their report on constitutional reforms for Ceylon. The substance of this demand was that the majority community, i.e. the Sinhalese who formed about 70% of the population should have only 50% of the seats in the legislature and in the Cabinet while the minority communities, who formed about 30% of the population, should have the other 50%. The Soulbury Commission, however, did not accept this principle. They accepted another worked out by the Ceylon Ministers. The aim of this latter was to give weightage to minorities but not parity. The general election of 1947 under the new constitution was fought by the Tamils largely under Tamil Congress leadership. And in the 1947-1952 Parliament the Tamil Congress led by Mr. Ponnambalam was the effective representative of the Tamils. Very soon, however, Mr. D. S. Senanayake, the Prime Minister, sought to persuade Mr. Ponnambalam to accept a Cabinet post. Mr. Ponnambalam accepted Cabinet office even though it split the Tamil Congress, the break-away group forming the Federal Party under Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam's leadership. On Mr. Dudley Senanayake becoming Premier in 1952 also the alliance between

the governing party—the U.N.P.^a — and the Tamil Congress subsisted. When Sir John became Prime Minister in 1953, he decided to dispense with Mr. Ponnambalam's services. When Mr. Ponnambalam went into the Opposition, however, he could not take all his former Tamil Congress members with him as some of his former colleagues stayed with the Government and absorbed themselves into the U.N.P. Although the Tamil Congress thus became almost a rump, Mr. Ponnambalam was still a leader with much popular appeal in Tamil-speaking areas. Mr. Ponnambalam's campaign against Sir John just prior to the latter's first official visit to the Northern province therefore could not be altogether ignored. Tamil M.Ps. of the Government party were also anxious to make the visit a success. Since the language problem had taken a new turn in 1954, Sir John was advised to make the language statement of September 1954.

Sir John's statement provoked much more opposition than was generally expected. On the 3rd of October, 1954, the Peradiga Sahithya Sangamaya pressed for the Sinhala Only policy once again. On the 4th of October a meeting was held in the Colombo Town Hall to protest against the Premier's parity declaration.⁵ Several other meetings were held in the Sinhalese-speaking areas with a similar purpose. On the other hand Dr. N. M. Perera, leader of the Lanka

^a For details see the section on the parties.

Sama Samaja Party,^a in a speech at Jaffna on the 10th of October commended Sir John's declaration and promised L.S.S.P. support for it.⁶

Although opinion both for and against Sinhala Only was canvassed in the weeks following Sir John's declaration, in the closing months of 1954, the issue of Sinhala Only vs. Parity was overshadowed by that of Swabasha vs. English. In January 1955 a deputation representing the All-Ceylon Bhikkhu^b Congress, Lanka Jatika Guru Sangamaya,^c All-Ceylon Ayurvedic Congress, All-Ceylon Literary Association and the Sinhala Jatika Sangamaya^d met the Premier to urge the implementation of Swabasha at the G.C.E. level in 1955. During the first half of 1955 the fight was concentrated on the Swabasha vs. English issue firstly to induce the Government to introduce it at the G.C.E. level in 1955, and secondly because the movement was not sure of the bona fides of the Government in implementing it. For instance, Mr. L. H. Mettananda,^e one of the leading supporters of Swabasha, declared that the Government's method of implementation of swabasha was a farce.⁷ This suspicion was such that the Opposition tabled a motion criticising the Government's swabasha policy and it was discussed in the House of Representatives in January 1955.

^a For details, see section on the parties.

^b Bhikku is the term used to describe a member of the Buddhist clergy.

^c Ceylon National Teachers' Association.

^d Sinhalese National Association.

^e Former principal of Ananda College—the premier Buddhist school of Ceylon.

The Sinhala Only issue, however, had not died down. Some Urban Councils, Town Councils and Village Committees^a in Sinhalese-speaking areas began to make slow moves to conduct business in Sinhalese. The feeling in the country in favour of Sinhala Only was such that certain leading members of the Government were compelled to defend the parity policy by speaking of the difficulties of making Sinhala Only the official language.⁸ In the meanwhile the Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party^b of Mr. Philip Gunawardene had declared that its language policy was to make Sinhalese the official language and Tamil a regional language. In January 1955 the V.L.S.S.P. Youth Conference reiterated this language policy. These events reverberated in the north. U.N.P. Tamil M.Ps. took refuge in the Government's bona fides with regard to parity. Mr. V. Kumaraswamy, a Tamil Member of Sir John's Government, assured the Tamils that the Government would implement the parity policy.⁹

Soon afterwards it was reported that a majority of the members of the Commission on Higher Education^c had recommended that Government should change its language policy on education to the mother tongue at the

^a Units of local government in Ceylon.

^b See the section on parties.

^c Appointed on 24.5.1953 under the Chairmanship of Sir E. Wijewardena, retired Chief Justice. The other members were: L. J. de S. Seneviratne (Civil Servant), R. S. de Saram, Warden of St. Thomas' College, Professor G. P. Malalasekera, Professor A. W. Mailvaganam, Professor E. O. E. Pereira and Mr. L. H. Mettananda—former principal of Ananda College.

primary stages and to one language—obviously Sinhalese—at the higher stages.¹⁰ This coincided with a time when the Sinhala Only movement was gathering much momentum. Large numbers of meetings were being held almost daily in various parts of the Sinhalese-speaking areas in support of Sinhala Only. Of these one was an “all-party” meeting where Messrs. Philip Gunawardena and William Silva of the V.L.S.S.P.; W. Dahanayake, ex-L.S.S.P.; C. R. Beligammana and S. D. Bandaranayake of the S.L.F.P.^a and several non-party speakers also took part.¹¹ About the same time the Executive Committee of the S.L.F.P. also bowed to the language storm in the country and decided that its language policy would be to make Sinhalese the official language with provision for the reasonable use of Tamil.¹²

In spite of these developments the Prime Minister continued to support parity and reiterated his policy in the House of Representatives on the 22nd of September 1955. About this time the Communist Party and the L.S.S.P. also decided to hold meetings in the country in support of parity. But the Sinhala Only demand was only exacerbated by such campaigning.

A Communist Party meeting in support of parity at the Town Hall, Colombo, on 12th October, 1955 was broken up by the Sinhala Only supporters.¹³ On 17th October, 1955,

^a See the section on parties. Mr. F. R. Jayasuriya, Lecturer in Economics at the University of Ceylon, was one of the most active Sinhala Only supporters. The successes of these “all-party” alliances were in great measure due to his efforts.

an L.S.S.P. meeting at the Colombo Town Hall in support of parity was also broken up and the L.S.S.P. leaders were given police protection to go home.¹⁴ The Sinhala Only demand had reached a high pitch of excitement.

In the meanwhile Tamil leaders were not idle. Tamil M.Ps. in the Government sought to assuage the Tamils by emphasising the Government's parity policy. Tamil M.Ps. in the Opposition on the other hand criticised the Government's implementation of swabasha as discriminatory against the Tamils.¹⁵ The Northern Province Principals' Association passed a motion deploring the recommendation of the majority of the Commission on Higher Education for one language in higher education.¹⁶ Mr. V. Nalliah, M.P., a Tamil supporter of the Government, declared that “it is a fundamental principle of the U.N.P. to give parity of status to Sinhalese and Tamil and we need have no fears as to the future of our language.”¹⁷ Sinhalese Ministers supported these declarations.¹⁸ In spite of these assurances and protests, however, the Tamils were genuinely alarmed and the Federal Party talked of cooperating with the Tamil Congress to fight the parity issue.¹⁹

In the last few months of 1955 the Sinhala Only movement raged high. It was around this time, in November, 1955 to be exact, that Sir John left Ceylon for Australia. In his absence the Sinhala Only demand was so great that many U.N.P. M.Ps. became supporters of the movement. Such was the

position when Sir John returned to Ceylon. Bowing to necessity he permitted members of the U.N.P. both inside and outside Parliament, including Cabinet Ministers, a free hand on the language issue. Sinhalese U.N.P. M.Ps. by and large supported Sinhala Only while Tamil U.N.P. M.Ps. campaigned for parity. With the greater part of the U.N.P. campaigning for Sinhala Only in addition to the S.L.F.P., V.L.S.S.P. and the newly formed Bhasha Peramuna, the emphasis of the campaign in the Sinhalese areas shifted to the question as to who was more ardent, more sincere and more able to implement the Sinhala Only policy.

In the meanwhile, the parity policy which the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. defended, cost them greatly in popularity and numbers. Some members and supporters of the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. joined the other existing opposition parties or set up as Independents supporting Sinhala Only and Socialism. There was dismay in the Marxist ranks. Since the C.P. and L.S.S.P. were thought of as the most dangerous opponents of the Government, the developments of the early part of 1956 appeared as most opportune to challenge them at the polls.

Certain political elements of a centre persuasion who were dissatisfied with Sir John's brusque handling of political situations had also been making overtures to Mr. Dudley Senanayake who had not taken an active interest in politics since his resignation from the Premiership. His cousin,

Mr. R. G. Senanayake, had resigned from Sir John Kotelawala's Government and was already campaigning against the Government. Various moves were afoot to bring these different elements together as a new liberal party under Mr. Dudley Senanayake's leadership. It is likely that these manoeuvres were a source of anxiety to Sir John and his supporters.²⁰

It was also felt that were the U.N.P. to bow to the popular demand in the Sinhalese areas over the language policy and go to the country, all other issues would be overshadowed, the Left would be greatly weakened and centre manoeuvres brought to an end.

There is reason to believe that on these grounds Sir John was advised, while in Australia, to change the language policy and to hold an early election. There is reason to believe that Sir John accepted this unofficial advice without reference to the party or to the Cabinet. Many U.N.P. M.Ps. were however not happy about an early election. Tamil M.Ps. in the U.N.P. were strongly opposed to the U.N.P. holding an early election with Sinhala Only as the major issue. There is evidence that the party organisation itself did not support the idea of an early election. Yet the arguments adduced by Sir John's unofficial advisers appeared to him to be strong. So it was obvious by January 1956 that Sir John would dissolve Parliament early to seek a mandate for Sinhala Only, and a Proclamation²¹ from Queen's House dissolved the second Parliament of Ceylon on the 18th of February, 1956.

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19. C.D.N. 24.8.55.
20. M.T. 19.3.56. and 20.3.56.
21. See Appendix I.

CHAPTER II

EXCURSIONS AND ALARUMS

Once the Prime Minister had made up his mind to hold an early general election, the U.N.P. decided as its first step in the campaign the dramatization of the major issue on which an appeal was to be made to the country. Both these facts, however, could not be kept secret. The knowledge that the U.N.P. might change over to Sinhala Only, far from reducing the intensity of the Sinhala Only movement, only added further zest to it. U.N.P. M.Ps. conveyed to the party leadership this new intensity and urgency of the demand. The U.N.P. therefore declared on the 9th of January that it would make an early public declaration on the language issue. It was not the intention of the party to appear to be forced to accept Sinhala Only. It wished to appear as a party bowing to popular will and seeking a mandate from the electorate to implement it. It wished to make the acceptance of Sinhala Only a democratic gesture and not an abject surrender. The U.N.P. was therefore anxious to get the party machinery ready for the election, to dramatise its Sinhala Only acceptance and then to dissolve Parliament. On the one hand therefore its members supported Sinhala Only even before the party accepted the policy officially, and on the other the Prime Minister was pleading patience with

the Sinhala Only enthusiasts. Thus in mid-January 1956, many U.N.P. M.Ps. were requesting the people to reject leftists because they stood for parity, and at the same time Sir John was pleading with the people not to force him on the language issue.

The drama of Sinhala Only was to be unfolded at the U.N.P. Annual Sessions fixed for the 17th and 18th of February, 1956. And on the 18th of January the U.N.P. committee on resolutions decided to have one resolution only at the conference, and that pertaining to the acceptance of Sinhala Only. Requests from Tamil U.N.P. members to include a motion on the agenda seeking the inclusion of Fundamental Rights in the constitution were rejected.

As it turned out the attempt at dramatization failed largely because the U.N.P. decisions were known to the public weeks in advance of their announcement. This fore-knowledge also put the U.N.P. very much on the defensive. On the one hand the Sinhala Only supporters in the country asked the U.N.P. to amend the constitution to provide for Sinhala Only before holding a general election, and on the other hand a campaign was set afoot against holding the general election before the Buddha Jayanti.^a These two moves were in a sense a part of the anti-U.N.P. campaign and will be discussed subsequently.

^a Buddha Jayanti was the celebration planned to commemorate the 2500 years anniversary of the passing away of the Lord Buddha. It was to begin in May 1956 and go on for a year.

However even though the U.N.P. did not succeed in its aim, the aim itself was a comparatively simple one.

The problems facing U.N.P. opponents were, however, of a far greater magnitude. Their basic problem was that they were opponents and not an Opposition. The language issue also divided the opponents into (in effect) two regional and separate groups. There were the Opposition groups in the Sinhalese-speaking provinces and those in the two Tamil-speaking provinces. The U.N.P. decided to contest only in the former and so did the Opposition groups supporting Sinhala Only. Only the L.S.S.P. and C.P. planned to contest throughout the country. In effect therefore the general election campaign divided itself into two parts—in the Sinhalese-speaking provinces and in the Tamil-speaking provinces. The problem in the former was for the opponents to become an Opposition. In the latter, with the U.N.P. keeping out, the problem was entirely different. The efforts of these various groups therefore must be examined separately.

I

In the Sinhalese-speaking provinces

Although the dissolution of Parliament came in mid-February 1956, Opposition leaders suspected the possibility of an early general election as early as the last quarter of 1955. By that time the Sinhala Only issue had already been the subject of much

discussion. Even so it had not gathered to itself the same degree of emotional excitement that it did in early 1956. Opposition leaders were also painfully aware that Opposition disunity had in no small measure contributed to previous U.N.P. victories. When an early general election was suspected therefore, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the leader of the S.L.F.P., took the initiative in opening negotiations with other major Opposition groups to reach a no-contest agreement amongst themselves and if possible an agreement on a common programme as well. By August 1955 talks were held between the S.L.F.P. and L.S.S.P. leaders. The L.S.S.P. was not willing to enter into an agreement with regard to a common programme. Yet it was willing to reach an agreement whereby the two parties were to avoid contesting each other in the different constituencies. The process consisted in considering the different constituencies one by one and allocating each one of them to the one or the other party. By the 31st of August 1955 agreement had been reached over about 50 constituencies. On the 3rd of September 1955, Mr. Bandaranaike reported to the S.L.F.P. Executive Committee that a satisfactory agreement had been reached between the S.L.F.P. and the L.S.S.P. except on a few minor points.¹ The no-contest agreement between these two parties was finalised and signed on 24th September 1955. Of the 89 constituencies involved some did not enter into

the agreement such as those in the Northern and Eastern provinces as the S.L.F.P. had no intention of contesting them. Of the rest a few were left out of the agreement and the large majority were allocated between themselves. On the same day Mr. Bandaranaike reported to the S.L.F.P. Executive Committee that satisfactory talks had been concluded with the V.L.S.S.P. leader, Mr. Philip Gunawardene, and that talks were proceeding with the Communist Party. He also reported that he was pressing all these groups (including the L.S.S.P.) to enter into a Joint Programme.² There was no difficulty in reaching a no-contest agreement with the Communist Party, so that by the end of 1955 the S.L.F.P. had succeeded in bringing some measure of electoral unity between itself and other Opposition groups. The L.S.S.P. and the C.P. were left to themselves to avoid contests with each other. There was also no serious risk of electoral contests between the V.L.S.S.P. and the C.P. On the other hand, there was little likelihood of bringing the V.L.S.S.P. and the L.S.S.P. on to a similar basis and no account was taken of the various Independents and the candidates of the newly formed Bhasa Peramuna.

By the end of 1955, the Sinhala Only demand had become far more powerful and both the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. lost a great deal of support and popularity because of their language policy. It was thought that it was unlikely that these parties would

win as many seats as they might have otherwise done. Since it was suspected, by that time, that the U.N.P. would opt for Sinhala Only, it was felt that the allocation of a large number of seats to the L.S.S.P. and C.P. from the Opposition would be tantamount to a presentation of these seats to the U.N.P. This fear was expressed though obliquely by Mr. Bandaranaike at the S.L.F.P. Annual Conference of 17.12.55. "I trust", he said, "that these parties, bearing in mind the main object of the need to defeat the U.N.P. will be prepared to review the position regarding these understandings (no-contest agreements) in a friendly way".³

In view of the loss of popularity of the L.S.S.P. and the C.P., those Opposition groups which accepted Sinhala Only (with various safeguards for Tamil) took the initiative in seeking a closer association among themselves. These groups consisted of the S.L.F.P., V.L.S.S.P., Bhasa Peramuna^a and several Independents. The Labour Party had for many years been in close association with the U.N.P. but there were signs that this alliance might not last long. The Labour Party was also therefore a likely Opposition group supporting Sinhala Only.

On the 20th of January, 1956, the "Ceylon Daily News" quoted Mr. Philip Gunawardene as saying that talks with Mr. Bandaranaike and Mr. W. Dahanayake of the Bhasa Peramuna on his call for mutual

^a Bhasa Peramuna means Language Front.

support were progressing satisfactorily. On the 21st the Labour Party decided to sever its connections with the U.N.P. and to allow its members to support any other democratic party in constituencies where Labour candidates did not contest. Some Labour Party members, however, especially Mr. Premadasa,^a broke away from the L.P. on its decision to sever its connections with the U.N.P.

The Bhasa Peramunas had risen throughout the country in the wake of the Sinhala Only movement. These were organised as an All-Ceylon Bhasa Peramuna with Mr. W. Dahanayake, M.P., and Mr. Somaweera Chandrasiri, ex-M.P., as leaders. The Independents were almost entirely M.Ps. who for various reasons were anti-U.N.P. but were unwilling to be members of any opposition party. The leading persons in this group were Messrs. I. M. R. A. Iriyagolle, T. B. Subasinghe, Hugh Fernando and L. Rajapakse. They were themselves planning to form a group of their own when the discussions referred to above were begun. During the early part of February the S.L.F.P., V.L.S.S.P., Bhasa Peramuna, the Labour Party and the Independents held joint talks to formulate a common programme and a joint list of candidates. In the meanwhile Mr. Maithripala Senanayake, an ex-U.N.P., Independent M.P. joined the S.L.F.P. and Mr. R. G. Senanayake, ex-U.N.P. Minister, decided to remain an Independent so that Mr. Iriyagolle led the Independents

^a Mr. Premadasa subsequently joined the U.N.P.

at the talks. The talks were successful and on the 21st of February 1956 these groups formed the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna^a under Mr. Bandaranaike's leadership.

Two of the major issues on which these groups sought a closer association were their opposition to the U.N.P. and their support of the Sinhala Only policy. On the latter principle therefore, even as talks were proceeding, the V.L.S.S.P. and the Bhasa Peramuna pressed Mr. Bandaranaike to drop the no-contest agreement with the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. Mr. Bandaranaike resisted these pressures on the ground that firstly the agreements had already been signed and that the language issue was not the only one on which the Opposition parties hoped to fight the election.⁴ After the formation of the M.E.P. these pressures were increased but Mr. Bandaranaike resisted them successfully. In the meanwhile Mr. A. E. Goonesinha, the acknowledged leader of the Labour Party, resigned from his ambassadorial office and returned to Ceylon. Mr. Goonesinha did not wish the Labour Party to be associated with the M.E.P. so long as the V.L.S.S.P. was in it. Since Mr. Bandaranaike would not accept Mr. Goonesinha's suggestions, the latter took the Labour Party out of the M.E.P. But Mr. R. E. Jayatilleke, who had been President of the Labour Party during Mr. Goonesinha's absence, remained in the M.E.P.⁵

^a Peoples' United Front.

Thus by the end of February 1956 the main pattern of the opposition front had been laid. Even so the pressure to scrap the no-contest agreements did not cease for long afterwards. The possibility of intra-opposition contests also was not obviated so long as the V.L.S.S.P. and the Bhasa Peramuna had no no-contest agreements with the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. And always there was the likelihood of Independents entering into the fray.

By February 1956 the feeling that the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. might not be able to win new seats or even hold their own seats from the U.N.P. had increased. Efforts were therefore made by Mr. Bandaranaike to get the L.S.S.P. to release some of the seats allocated to it under the no-contest agreement. The L.S.S.P. did make some concessions. Mr. Bandaranaike's position as the leader of the M.E.P. was a delicate one, because while his S.L.F.P. stood by the no-contest agreements, the V.L.S.S.P. and the Bhasa Peramuna had no such agreements. In some cases likely contests between them and the L.S.S.P. could not be avoided. In others Mr. Bandaranaike used his influence to dissuade these groups from contesting the L.S.S.P. as was the case at Panadura. This was no easy task, especially as some S.L.F.P. members who had hoped to contest the L.S.S.P. in the seats the latter held or were allocated, resigned because of the no-contest agreement and joined the Bhasa Peramuna to contest these at the elections.⁶ Mr. Somaweera Chandrasiri of the Bhasa Peramuna

made every effort to break the no-contest agreements. His efforts, however, ceased to be effective when in early March 1956 he was suspected of flirting with the U.N.P. and for all practical purposes ceased to represent the Bhasa Peramuna; and Mr. Dahanayake became its effective leader.⁷ In addition to being peace-maker between the M.E.P. and the L.S.S.P. Mr. Bandaranaike also tried and succeeded in the last two weeks before the election in persuading a number of Independent candidates to withdraw in favour of the M.E.P.

Efforts to avoid contests between the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. also did not run smoothly. As a general rule both parties accepted the principle that a seat held by one group should not be contested by another.⁸ When, however, the L.S.S.P. hinted that it might nominate a candidate for the three-member Colombo Central seat, it was recognised as a threat by the C.P. which held one of them. The C.P. therefore threatened to contest seats held by the L.S.S.P. This was however finally avoided. There was much more acrimonious debate over seats not held by either and left free by the S.L.F.P. Such was the case at Moratuwa where the C.P. was anxious to nominate a candidate. Finally Moratuwa was left free for the L.S.S.P. In the end, however, except in Jaffna where the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. clashed, the two parties were finally able to reach agreement.

Thus in the Sinhalese-speaking provinces, the U.N.P. was faced by a fairly united opposition at least in electoral arrangements. The C.P. and the L.S.S.P. avoided contesting each other except in Jaffna. The S.L.F.P. avoided contesting either except in a few. A few V.L.S.S.P. and Bhasa Peramuna candidates did clash with the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. Some of these clashes were not entirely unfavourable to the Opposition. Thus it was held that the presence of two Opposition candidates, one L.S.S.P. and the other M.E.P. (Bhasa Peramuna), in Wellawatte-Galkissa would actually help one of them to win. Even where the V.L.S.S.P. and the Bhasa Peramuna clashed with the L.S.S.P., the leader of the M.E.P. watched the situation closely. Thus on the 22nd of March, 1956 a spokesman of the M.E.P. declared that there was a definite understanding among the leaders of the parties which formed the M.E.P. that as the election campaign progressed the opposition candidate who did not have much prospect of winning should be withdrawn in favour of the stronger opposition candidate. This understanding was to apply only in constituencies where the presence of several opposition candidates would help the U.N.P.¹⁰ Those who did not fall within this general pattern of Government vs. Opposition were the Labour Party and the Independents.

On the whole therefore efforts at Opposition unity reached a level of success unknown at any time before. Of the 73 constituencies

returning 79 members from the Sinhalese-speaking provinces, the M.E.P., L.S.S.P. and the C.P. clashed in only 12. Even this latter number may give a wrong impression. Of these 12, Kiriella and Colombo North formed two. Opposition support gathered round the M.E.P. (V.L.S.S.P.) candidate at Kiriella and the L.S.S.P. candidate at Colombo North. However, since the L.S.S.P. contested Kiriella, the V.L.S.S.P. decided to contest Colombo North. So while these clashes disclosed the L.S.S.P.-V.L.S.S.P. antagonism, they were not as significant from the general opposition point of view as it may appear. Again the C.P.-M.E.P. clash at Matara was not so significant as it may appear. When it is remembered that some Opposition clashes were thought to be of advantage to the Opposition, one could say that for the first time in a decade an electorally united Opposition met the U.N.P. at the polls.

II

In the Tamil-speaking provinces

While these events were taking place, the Sinhala Only movement was having its repercussions in the north. Throughout 1955 the fears of Tamil M.Ps. in the Government were assuaged by the forthright declarations of various Ministers that the Government's policy was parity for both languages. The Tamils in the Opposition were not so satisfied. In August 1955 the Tamil Congress called

for a United Front of Tamils to safeguard the Tamil language and also for the inclusion of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution.¹¹ Mention has already been made of the Federal Party's declaration of willingness to work in co-operation with the Tamil Congress. By January 1956 it was known that the U.N.P. was planning to accept Sinhala Only and go back on its parity policy. The U.N.P. had planned to hold its annual sessions in February and to make the acceptance of Sinhala Only as its sole policy decision. The reaction of Tamil U.N.P. M.Ps. to this was not long delayed. Mr. V. Kumaraswamy, a Parliamentary Secretary in the Kotelawala Government, promised on the 9th of January to leave the U.N.P. and work for the establishment of an autonomous government for the Tamils if the U.N.P. abandoned the accepted policy of parity on the language issue.¹² On the 12th he resigned from his office of Parliamentary Secretary. On the same day Tamil-speaking M.Ps. supporting the Government decided to appeal to the Prime Minister to drop the Sinhala Only motion from the agenda of the U.N.P. annual sessions.¹³ Several U.N.P. Tamil M.Ps. and Senators also set out to draw up a charter of Fundamental Rights which Mr. Natesan, a Tamil Minister, sought to move at the U.N.P. sessions. This eleven-point Bill of Rights aimed in the main at protecting language, civil and property rights.¹⁴ Both these requests were turned down by the U.N.P. In the meanwhile Mr. C. Sunthéralingam outlined the specific grievances

of the Tamils against Sir John's Government. The latter was charged with linguistic discrimination, discriminatory recruitment to the public service, civic discrimination on linguistic grounds, discriminatory land alienation and suppression of liberty. He demanded "an autonomous Tamil Ilankai", federal or independent as determined by a plebiscite.¹⁵

On the 18th of January, 7 Tamil members of the U.N.P. resigned from the party and where any of them were members of the Government, from the Government also. This left a few more Tamil M.Ps. in the U.N.P. but they also resigned by the end of the month.

It was noticed that the idea of a United Front of Tamils was mooted a few months earlier. With the resignation of several leading Tamil M.Ps. from the U.N.P. active steps were taken to form a United Front. A meeting was held at the residence of one of the ex-U.N.P. Tamil M.Ps. on the 18th of January 1956. Apart from several ex-U.N.P. M.Ps., there were present at that meeting Mr. Suntheralingam, and the leaders of the Tamil Congress and the Federal Party. At this meeting it was agreed that the participating M.P.s should act as conveners of a series of meetings to form a United Front. It was also agreed that the objectives of the United Front should be (1) to maintain the identity, individuality and freedom of the Tamil-speaking people; (2) to preserve their language and culture and (3) to keep inviolate

their traditional homelands.¹⁶ The Federal Party representatives urged a Federal state as the means to achieve these ends. Others desired an independent state. A compromise was achieved by declaring that the United Front would agitate and struggle for the creation of a Tamil state which would offer to federate with the Sinhalese on terms of complete equality.¹⁷

The first conference was held on the 22nd of January in Colombo. Even before this the Federal Party representatives had withdrawn their signatures as conveners of the meeting. Mr. Chelvanayakam subsequently explained that this was because a badly worded phrase gave the impression that the Federal Party was for an independent Tamil state and not for a federal state.

Another meeting however was fixed for the 1st of February. In the meanwhile the Executive Committee of the Federal Party met and decided that all Tamil-speaking M.Ps. who by virtue of their association with the U.N.P. had helped to bring about the language crisis should not contest at the next election.¹⁸ Such a decision if carried out would have of course excluded every Tamil political leader except those in the Federal Party and whatever the justification for it may have been, it was bound to make the United Front an impossibility. The meeting scheduled for the 1st of February was held as planned. This more representative meeting reflected the ideas of the Tamil-speaking people more

fully. Apart from the demand for an independent Tamil state and a federal state a third idea was also put forward at this meeting. It was pointed out that the United Front objectives could be achieved in a unitary state by carving out an area sacrosanct to the Tamils where there would be no Sinhalese infiltration and where Tamil would be permitted to be the language of administration on a regional basis. A resolution that the United Front should not support any government that (a) did not grant parity of status to Sinhalese and Tamil throughout the Island and (b) stop Sinhalese colonisation in Northern and Eastern provinces was also the subject of much discussion. Several members present stated that it was not fair to ask for parity and at the same time insist that no Sinhalese colonists should be permitted in the Northern and Eastern provinces. These members put forward the policy of a separate area where Tamil would be a regional language and where there would be no Sinhalese "infiltration". They also suggested that the United Front should be empowered to negotiate with any Government on these lines and to support any Government which met these demands. Many ex-U.N.P. Tamils were in favour of such a policy which however was strongly resisted by the Federal Party.

In spite of these differences some measure of agreement was reached and the chairman of the meeting issued the following communique :—

"A large number of questions including language and colonisation of Tamil areas

were discussed. There was complete agreement regarding the objectives of the United Front. The machinery of implementation was generally agreed upon. The formation of a United Front was agreed upon. The presentation of a single list of nominations was agreed to in principle. The machinery of nomination is to be discussed on February 4th when the group will meet again".

Although the Federal Party accepted the idea of a single list in principle, it did so with mental reservations. The problem as to who should be the nominating body also naturally arose. It was suggested that a National Assembly of Tamils should elect a Council of Elders who, acting in liaison with three senior M.Ps. in the group, would receive representations in regard to nominations. The Federal Party representative agreed to this in principle but wished to consult his working committee on this matter. This was why another meeting was fixed for the 4th of February.

At the meeting of 4th of February the whole edifice of a United Front broke down. The Federal Party refused to accept a single list of nominations. It declared that a United Front should be one of objectives and not of candidates. On this there was almost a complete break-down of the talks, but it was agreed to meet again on the 8th of February. At this meeting too the Federal Party objected to a single list of

nominations either by agreement among the groups themselves or through a Council of Elders. Thus 21 days of labour ended in a note of abandonment and later of recrimination. Several leading participants in these discussions declared that the Federal Party performed a complete somersault on the single list issue between the 1st and the 4th of February. The Federal Party alleged, however, that by "the 1st of February it was further evident that a one-sided attempt had been made to pack the so-called Council of Elders".²¹ It declared that the attempt of ex-U.N.P. Tamil M.Ps. to form a United Front was a device to come back to Parliament in spite of the failure of their policy.²² It also pointed out that a free election was the only means of testing whether the Tamil-speaking people favoured a Federal Constitution.

With the break-down of the United Front talks those who had participated in them, barring Federal Party representatives, planned to seek a common front among themselves and to meet the Federal Party at the hustings.²³ But this was of no avail. Tamil public men who were not M.Ps. sought to bring the various competing groups together once again. A mass meeting was held in Jaffna on the 23rd of February with this purpose in view. Jaffna lawyers sought to establish a National Assembly of Tamils with representatives from the entire country. In March 1956, Mr. Suntheralingam called for the formation of a Tamil Resistance

Movement.²⁴ None of these efforts succeeded. So that when election time came constituencies in the Northern and Eastern provinces were contested by all groups: the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. who were not parties to the United Front discussions; the Federal Party; the Tamil Congress; the Tamil Resistance Movement and by Independents who were mostly ex-U.N.P. candidates.

III

Acceptances and selections.

Long before Parliament was dissolved, the major political groups gave thought to the subject of candidates for the various constituencies. As far as the U.N.P. was concerned one of the major problems was to choose the candidates from among the large number who sought party nomination. Since the U.N.P. had decided not to contest in the Northern and Eastern provinces, the number of seats for which the U.N.P. might nominate was immediately reduced to 79. Even before Parliament was dissolved Sir John declared that about 170 persons had applied for U.N.P. nomination.²⁵ Choosing the party nominees was made difficult by the fact that many applicants were preparing to contest outside the party ticket if they did not receive party nomination. As the events proved this was not an idle threat, for several applicants who did not receive U.N.P. nomination subsequently came forward as Independents and even as M.E.P. candidates sponsored by the S.L.F.P. or the Bhasa Peramuna.

The U.N.P. sought to protect itself by insisting that where there were more than one applicant for a seat, each one should sign a pledge not to contest if party nomination were not given. Thus for Udugama there were four applicants and the party choice fell on Mr. Nagahawatte.²⁶ Nor did the U.N.P. rest satisfied with selecting nominees from among voluntary applicants. Both the party leaders in the capital and some in the different constituencies gave thought to likely and desirable candidates for the party. Several leading U.N.P. citizens in Negombo took the initiative in recommending the name of Mr. Quentin Fernando as the U.N.P. nominee for that seat.²⁷ The U.N.P. did not hesitate to invite certain persons of S.L.F.P. persuasion who appeared to have good chances of victory and who might otherwise have contested as S.L.F.P. candidates. At one stage the S.L.F.P. was reticent in announcing its candidates in advance for fear that the U.N.P. might try to entice some of them, and the S.L.F.P. alleged that the U.N.P. tried to crimp S.L.F.P. candidates who had "a measure of following in the constituencies concerned".²⁸ A number of likely S.L.F.P. candidates were lost to the U.N.P. in this manner, the most startling being the success with which the U.N.P. persuaded Mr. Bernard Aluwihare, an S.L.F.P. leader, to join the U.N.P.

It was obvious that one of the chief considerations in the choice of U.N.P. nominees was their chance of electoral success. It was

also obvious that the U.N.P. assumed that the personal standing of the individual candidate in a particular constituency was of great importance to his electoral success. It was for this reason that wherever possible preference was given to the local applicant. Chances of electoral success were however matters of subjective conception. And there was no doubt that it was the Prime Minister's decision which was final in the preponderant majority of cases.^a The U.N.P. indeed had a Nominations Board and this met on the 2nd of February.²⁹ But the statements of U.N.P. nominees and reports of the press close to the Prime Minister, suggested that the last word lay with the latter. Nor did the party branches have much influence on nominations unless their recommendations converged with those of the Prime Minister and the party Executive Committee. The recommendations of the party branches at Matara and Bandarawela were not followed in nominating candidates for those seats.³⁰ One of the persons who suffered as a result declared that party branches were not consulted before nominations were made. "It is not democratic," he argued, "to make decisions according to the wishes of individuals and to order the branch associations to work for candidates nominated by the high command without the consent of branch associations."³¹ On the other hand the Prime Minister is known to have had discussions with the Matale

^a The Prime Minister personally interviewed many of the applicants for party nomination.

branch with regard to a prospective U.N.P. nominee. It seems reasonable to assume that party branches were consulted where it suited the party high command to do so.

The problems before the M.E.P. were more complicated and difficult. The M.E.P. consisted of the S.L.F.P., V.L.S.S.P., Bhasa Peramuna and Independents. Only the S.L.F.P. had no-contest agreements with the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. Each of the constituent groups within the M.E.P. exercised the right to nominate its candidates. The V.L.S.S.P. was loath to leave too many seats for the L.S.S.P. to contest. Since several S.L.F.P. men also had joined the Bhasa Peramuna with the express intention of circumventing the no-contest agreement, one of Mr. Bandaranaike's tasks was to avoid as many contests as possible between the V.L.S.S.P. and L.S.S.P., and the Bhasa Peramuna and L.S.S.P.

On the other hand the S.L.F.P. and the V.L.S.S.P. had reached a certain understanding as to the seats each group was to contest within the M.E.P. fold. Mr. Bandaranaike took care to see that these understandings were not over-stepped. The problem was raised over Matugama which the S.L.F.P. had ear-marked for Mr. Wilmot Perera. When the latter declined to seek election V.L.S.S.P. Reggie Perera, sought the M.E.P. nomination for Matugama. The final choice fell on Mr. D. Pasqual who had almost until that time been a member of the U.N.P. These problems arose because the number of persons seeking S.L.F.P.

nomination was inadequate at the beginning. There is truth in the statement that some S.L.F.P. nominees were those who had applied and failed to obtain U.N.P. nomination.³² Of these some sought the S.L.F.P. when they knew of their failure to secure U.N.P. nomination. Others decided to come forward as Independents and subsequently, but before the election, joined the S.L.F.P.

Some prospective candidates had initially announced their candidature as Independents and as the election campaign progressed sought and obtained the S.L.F.P. or M.E.P. party ticket.³³ The S.L.F.P. leadership also contacted certain persons for S.L.F.P. nomination but without success. The "Times of Ceylon" quoted an S.L.F.P. spokesman as saying that the party's effort to get Mr. N. H. Karunaratne to contest Dedigama met with no success.³⁴ Mr. Bandaranaike's problem was that while there was a general shortage of candidates for the S.L.F.P., there were applicants to contest seats which were sought by the L.S.S.P. or the C.P. or even by the M.E.P. Independents. Thus the S.L.F.P. branch at Dandagamuwa asked for the nomination of an S.L.F.P. candidate for that seat when it was already held by Mr. Iriyagolle, Independent-M.E.P.³⁵ Or in the alternative the long-standing S.L.F.P. sympathiser, who sought nomination for a seat, appeared to have little chance of success as against an ex-U.N.P. applicant. The problem before the S.L.F.P. was to find a sufficient number of

candidates with a reasonable chance of electoral success. By means of the various methods discussed earlier, the problem was satisfactorily solved so that the M.E.P. list was adequate to offer the choice of an alternative government to the people.

Although the L.S.S.P. had decided to put up only a limited number of candidates, to find suitable persons even for this limited number was no easy task. Being a fairly well-disciplined Marxist party its nominees had to satisfy a certain basic condition. They had to be party members of some years standing. This alone limited the choice. The L.S.S.P. also sought nominees who had a reasonable chance of electoral success. Thus the party held that generally speaking a candidate or his family had to be known in the constituency he or she was to contest. This requirement could not always be satisfied. Of course where the candidate was a leader of national prominence, the problem did not arise. In other cases although the L.S.S.P. held to the general principle, it could not always follow it. For instance, the L.S.S.P. had no intention of contesting Puttalam till Mr. Mansoor offered himself as a candidate. Party nomination was given to him although he had little previous connection with Puttalam. When an applicant with local connections came forward, the party was anxious to consider his chances of electoral success. Thus although party nomination was given to Mr. Zavier at Kalmunai, it was done without much enthusiasm

or optimism. Thus the L.S.S.P. was not unmindful of certain considerations which even non-Marxist parties took note of. It is obvious that even the L.S.S.P. considered the individual merits of the candidate as an important factor in electoral success. Since the Communist Party sought to contest even a more limited number of seats, it did not face the problem of candidates. One might even say that the C.P. had more prospective candidates than prospective seats.

As in previous elections the prospect of an early general election produced a host of prospective Independent candidates. Some of these were non-starters in the sense that they changed their minds before nomination day. There were non-starters at Colombo Central, Maskeliya, Colombo South, Agalawatte, Puttalam, Horana, Avissawella and Ja-Ela. Some Independents were those who failed to obtain U.N.P. nomination. Thus at Badulla, Kadugannawa, Baddegama, Matugama, Bandarawela, there were Independents who sought and failed to get U.N.P. nomination. The Independent candidate at Dedigama had failed to obtain S.L.F.P. nomination. An Independent at Matugama was a V.L.S.S.P. member contesting as an Independent to prevent a break-up of the V.L.S.S.P.-S.L.F.P. agreement. Some were Leftists who did not wish to be associated with a party as at Udugama, Nattandiya, Colombo North and Nikaweratiya. Some were put up by other candidates for tactical reasons. It was alleged that one

of the Independent candidates for Mirigama was put up to confuse the U.N.P. voters with two candidates with the same surname, one of them being the U.N.P. candidate.³⁶ It was also alleged that the other Independent candidate at Mirigama was put up to help the M.E.P.³⁷ It was suggested that a certain Independent candidate was put forward for Moratuwa to prevent the Buddhist-Goigama voters of Salpiti Korale from voting against the U.N.P. candidate.³⁸ Others were Independents truly so, such as Mr. Wickrematilleke of Udugama, Mr. Lane-rolle of Gampola. There were also Independent candidates who, to say the least, were out of the ordinary. One Independent at Kadugannawa solicited support on the ground that for over 8 years he had not broken a single of the Buddhist Five Precepts. "When the day (polling) draws near," he declared, "they will say that I have been taken to the police station or to the lunatic asylum. Don't believe these stories."³⁹ Among the Independents there were indeed some who justified the comments of the "Ceylon Daily News" of 10th March. "The nomination lists," it wrote, "has also its usual quota of those who are locally recognised as 'mad-fellows' or 'pisso' all wearing the Independent label".

In the Northern and Eastern provinces the picture was different. One of the reasons for the breakdown of the United Front talks was that there were so many prospective candidates for so few seats. Since

the non-Federal Party candidates could not form themselves into a group the large majority of them contested as Independents. It has been traditional for the Eastern province to send up a large number of Independents. In 1956 also the quota was there. Although the label was "Independent" the loyalties of some of the candidates of these two provinces were known. Mr. Sivasittamparam of Point Pedro and Mr. A. I. Rajasingham of Trincomalee were supported by the Tamil Congress.⁴⁰ Mr. Mohamed Ali of Muttur "personally prepared to come forward as a Federal Party candidate" but contested as an Independent in deference to the wishes of many constituents.⁴¹ Mr. Jawad of Pottuvil had the support of the U.N.P.

These hectic preparations, manoeuvres, conferences, agreements were in large measure concluded by nomination day, the 8th of March 1956. From then on the campaign began in earnest.

REFERENCES

1. Free Lanka 11.9.55.
2. do. 2.10.55.
3. do. 25.12.55.
4. C.D.N. 25.1.56.
5. T. of C. 27.2.56.
6. Tribune 9.2.56.
7. M.T. 2.3.56.
8. do. 13.2.56.
9. do. 6.3.56.
10. do. 22.3.56.
11. C.D.N. 30.8.55.
12. do. 10.1.55.
13. do. 14.1.55.
14. See Appendix II.
15. T. of C. 16.1.56.
16. Mr. Natesan's statement M.T. 13.2.56.
17. Mr. Natesan's & Mr. Vanniasingham's statement T. of C. 6.2.56.
18. T. of C. 30.1.56.
19. do.
20. T. of C. 2.2.56.
21. Mr. Chelvanayakam—T. of C. 13.2.56.
22. do. T. of C. 14.2.56.
23. T. of C. 11.2.56.
24. do. 5.3.56.
25. L. 8.2.56.
26. Udugama 11.
27. Negombo 3.
28. Free Lanka 12.2.56.
29. C.D.N. 3.2.56.
30. do. 2.2.56.
31. do. 24.4.56.
32. C.O. 31.3.56.
33. Mr. M. Senanayake—C.D.N. 28.1.56.
34. T. of C. 23.2.56.
35. Dandagamuwa 7.
36. Mirigama 5.
37. do.
38. Moratuwa 19.
39. Kadugannawa 4.
40. Tribune 15.3.56. and T. of C. 31.3.56.
41. T. of C. 31.3.56.

CHAPTER III

PARTIES AND THEIR MANIFESTOES

Although Ceylon went through more than a century of constitutional evolution before the existing constitutional set up was reached, no political parties in the modern sense developed till very recently. There were indeed political organisations. The more permanent among them were based on the communal principle such as the European Association or the All-Ceylon Moors' Association. A Ceylon National League was established in 1917 and was converted to the Ceylon National Congress in 1919. None of them were mass parties. Since universal franchise came only in 1931, the need for mass parties was not felt before that time. They were essentially middle-class groups clustering round a few leading personalities.¹ Two more organisations on the communal principle were established in the years 1931-1945, these being the Tamil Congress and the Sinhala Maha Sabha. The only non-communal parties to be established during this period were the Lanka Sama Samaja Party established in 1935, and the Ceylon Communist Party established in 1943. These latter were still very much in their infancy. Under the Donoughmore Constitution, therefore, for all practical purposes the government was carried on without the benefit of political parties.

In 1944 it was known that the Soulbury Commission had recommended a cabinet form of government for Ceylon. It was held that political parties were necessary to operate a cabinet system. The Soulbury recommendations were put into law in 1946 and the elections under the new constitution were to be held in 1947. It was the need to contest these elections as a party which inspired the formation of the United National Party by the men in power under the previous constitution.

I

United National Party.

In September 1946 an inaugural meeting was summoned by these persons and the United National Party was formally established. Among the groups summoned and participating were the Ceylon National Congress and the Sinhala Maha Sabha. Mr. D. S. Senanayake, then Leader of the State Council^a was elected leader of the new party. The U.N.P. was returned as the largest single party at the 1947 general election though without a clear majority in the House. Mr. Senanayake was appointed Prime Minister. With the help of the nominated members and several Independents he was able to maintain a stable government till his untimely death in 1952.

^a The Legislature under the Donoughmore Constitution.

His son, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, who was then Minister of Agriculture succeeded to the Premiership. Under his leadership the U.N.P. went to the country in 1952 and was returned to power with a large majority.² In the following year the Government decided to remove the rice-subsidy which had kept the price of rice to the Ceylon consumer very low. The public indignation at this led to a hartal in August 1953. Mr. Dudley Senanayake had to face these troubles without a loyal cabinet since Sir John Kotelawala had not forgotten or forgiven Mr. Senanayake for his being appointed Prime Minister over his own claims. Mr. Senanayake therefore resigned soon afterwards and Sir John became Premier and leader of the U.N.P.

Membership of the U.N.P. is open to all registered electors who accept the policy and programme of the party and conform to the party constitution. Membership is open either directly or through branch associations. The final authority constitutionally speaking is a conference which consists of delegates from the branches, direct members, office-bearers, members of the Executive Committee and members of the party in Parliament. At each annual conference the office-bearers and the Executive Committee are elected. The Chairman of the Party is also chairman of the Executive Committee which is the effective party organisation in between conferences. There is provision to appoint a Working Committee from among the members of the Executive Committee.

As provided for in the constitution there was a large number of party branches in 1956. Branches were not confined to a particular area such as a constituency. One constituency may have as many as 10 or 12 branches of the party as at Chavakachcheri in 1955.³ In Kiriella there was a constituency branch, a women's association and youth leagues. It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of these branches. As a general rule where a constituency was represented by an active U.N.P. member or by a prospective U.N.P. candidate there were one or more U.N.P. branches. There were only a few women's associations but the youth leagues appeared to be considerable in their membership.⁴

The U.N.P. in terms of declared policy is a party of the centre with its right-wing having the greater weight. Its social conscience is informed more by the ideas of charity and humanitarianism than by those of social justice and the right to equality. It is informed by the spirit of individualism and disapproves of the paternalistic state. Thus Sir John once asked the people not to expect the Government to spoon-feed them. When the people showed initiative and enterprise, he declared, the Government always came to their assistance.⁵ Mr. Shirley Corea, a U.N.P. Minister, declared that it was not the U.N.P. policy to distribute the lands of the rich among the poor and bring them down to the same status, but to collect taxes from the rich and thereby improve

the living standards of the poor. It was the rich people who helped the Government to help the poor, so it was unwise to take their property away from them.⁶

U.N.P. policies in the various spheres of state-activity were guided by a cautious policy of improvement without changing the basic pattern of society. It admitted that the standard of living in the country is low compared with that of the U.S.A. or the U.K. The answer to this lay in increased production. It saw no barriers in the existing pattern of social relations to increased production. The limiting factor was the paucity of capital. Hence this limited resource should be carefully husbanded and used according to some order of priority. Such a scheme should aim to maintain in its present level of efficiency, the income-producing plantation industry. Increases in production should be sought in new enterprises and by guidance, assistance and encouragement to those engaged in the various spheres of production.⁷

It accepted the need for industrial development. In view of the failure of certain government-sponsored industries, it sought industrial development through encouraging and aiding private enterprise and cottage industries. The means of encouragement were technical education, financial aid, encouragement of foreign capital and industrial research.⁸

In the sphere of agricultural development too it believed in a policy of caution without changing the basic pattern. It sought to

bring better methods of cultivation, better seed and technical training to agriculturists. But it saw no need to go beyond and radically reform the tenancy laws in agriculture. ^a

In that sphere traditionally covered by social legislation, the same attitude can be seen. The spirit was one of charity rather than of duty. Even here it sought the assistance of voluntary agencies wherever possible. The principle of relief of widespread distress caused by floods or drought and public assistance to the sick, aged, infirm and orphans under 16 was accepted on a fairly wide but low scale. Even so only 75,000 persons received some form of public assistance in 1953/4. ⁹

The spirit of the U.N.P. can be seen in its housing policies. It sought to provide scope for private enterprise and local bodies in this matter. The methods of assistance to the former are noteworthy. It aimed at giving loans to private individuals to build their own houses and at giving loans to private individuals to build houses for renting. The latter were to be given exemptions from income tax. However the hope was expressed that renting should be on a reasonable basis with the opportunity given to the tenant to be on the rent-purchase system. ¹⁰ "For everyone who has a reasonably steady employment or income and wishes to own his own house in due course there will be

^a The Paddy Lands Act of 1953 did not go far and even this was not implemented throughout the country.

some way which the Ministry (of Housing) can find for the fulfilment of his desire.... To the average villager who has been content with sub-standard housing during 2,000 years of our history there is also a hope." ¹¹

The U.N.P. to repeat had no desire to change the basic pattern of society. It believed in private-enterprise and private-property in the economic sphere. It had no desire to disturb the existing position of the plantation industry, either in control or in ownership. Its aim was to ameliorate the conditions of the under-privileged within the context of the existing society without changing its basic institutions.

The U.N.P. Manifesto for the General Election of 1956 sought a renewal of popular confidence in it on the party's successful wardship of the affairs of state. It urged that it sought a renewal of its mandate one year before it was due, because of its new language policy. "This substantial change in our policy must be now endorsed by the people. We also require a two-thirds majority to alter our constitution to this effect. In all other respects we shall preserve intact our present Constitution. We shall resist all efforts to divide the country. Even if we are unable to amend the Constitution our first act will be to pass legislation to make Sinhalese the state language." The Manifesto claimed that the party had raised Ceylon's international prestige to new heights. It claimed that Ceylon played a leading role in the birth of the magnificent concept of

Afro-Asian unity. The party was able to obtain for Ceylon "her rightful place in the General Assembly of the United Nations and this set the final seal of international approval on Ceylon's status as a sovereign, independent and peace-loving nation".

It pointed out its success in repatriating a large number of Indian nationals from Ceylon and its hopes of an early settlement of the Indian problem. It claimed that in "agriculture and industry, in our health and social services alike, we have advanced considerably ;.....by careful planning and consistent effort, it (Government) has not only maintained but vastly improved the country's standard of living". The Government has opened up more than 150,000 acres of new land since 1947 and nearly 20,000 peasant families have been moved from the populous parts of the island "to begin a new life in these vast colonies". The Government has devoted much attention to increasing the productivity of the land. It has distributed "millions of rupees annually to cultivators all over the island to help them buy fertilizer, seed paddy and agricultural implements". It buys at extremely generous prices the paddy and subsidiary crops of the farmer. It has undertaken a scheme of rubber-replanting which is, proportionately speaking, the highest for any rubber-producing country. A parallel programme of coconut re-planting has just been undertaken.

The Government has done a great deal to explore new markets for our expanding

principal crops. The pattern of our external trade is slowly but surely changing. The Government is aware of the necessity for industrial development. Many large factories have already been established by the Government and others are rapidly springing up. "The Government has harnessed the vast energies of the waters of Laxapana." It has given high priority to the development of cottage industries. Raw materials and equipment are supplied on easy terms and a guaranteed price scheme has been instituted to facilitate the marketing of these village products. The Government has facilitated the building of 44,000 houses during the period of the first Six-Year Plan. A new Ministry of Housing was established in 1953 and a sum of Rs. 90 million has been earmarked for spending during the second Six-Year Plan. Since 1946, the school-going population has doubled. Education is no longer the privilege of a few. In the field of health, malaria has been wiped out; small-pox and cholera almost completely eliminated. The death-rate from typhoid has been halved. The general death-rate has been cut by half.

"Buddhism is the religion practised by the vast majority of the people of this country. We have always recognised this fact in all our actions and will continue to do so. Consistent, however, with the true principles of democracy we will continue to recognise the policy of non-discrimination on religious grounds which is embodied in our constitution."

The Government has sponsored many unique schemes to celebrate the Buddha Jayanthi—the 2500th anniversary of the attainment of Parinibbhana by the Lord Buddha ^a. The translation of the Tripitaka ^b into Sinhalese, the rebuilding of the Temple of the Tooth, generous financial assistance to Vidyalankara Pirivena ^c to compile a full concordance of the sacred Buddhist texts are among these. The Government shall also give its most earnest attention to the report of the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry.

There is no inflation in the country. The finances are sound. The Government has ameliorated the conditions of service of the public servants. All this has been achieved through democratic institutions and during a period of stability. A stable government is absolutely necessary for the peaceful progress of our people. The U.N.P. has given the country a stable government since freedom was achieved. It is the only party that can ensure stability in the foreseeable future.

In these terms the U.N.P. Manifesto offered to continue its previous policies. There was nothing dramatic or novel. There was no sense of urgency but complacency. In this way it magnified some of the disadvantages which a party in power faces at a general election.

^a The passing away of the Lord Buddha.

^b The Buddhist Canon.

^c A Temple Institution for Higher Education.

II

Sri Lanka Freedom Party

When the U.N.P. was formed in 1946, Mr. Bandaranaike's Sinhala Maha Sabha was the largest single element in the new party. Although Mr. D. S. Senanayake was elected leader, Mr. Bandaranaike was considered as the heir-presumptive to the leadership. Within a few years of U.N.P. rule, it appeared to Mr. Bandaranaike that his position was being assailed from within. Mr. Bandaranaike sought to strengthen his position by reviving the Sinhala Maha Sabha and by giving leadership to the swabasha movement and to the Buddhist revival then taking place. Mr. D. S. Senanayake did not accept the emphasis which Mr. Bandaranaike placed on these movements. So Mr. Bandaranaike crossed over from the U.N.P. and formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party on the 2nd of September 1951. Five M.Ps. besides Mr. Bandaranaike joined the new party. The S.L.F.P. made a bid for power in the 1952 elections by contesting fifty-nine seats but succeeded in winning only 9. ¹²

Membership of the S.L.F.P. is open to all adult nationals of Ceylon. Unlike in the U.N.P. all members are admitted as, and remain, direct members subject to the rules of the party. There is provision to establish party branches in constituencies or other divisions of the island as the Working Committee of the party may determine.

The constitution provides for an Annual Conference of the party. The conference is largely a delegate conference of representatives from the branch associations including women's associations and youth leagues. It is the function of the conference to decide the general policy of the party.

The constitution provides for a General Committee of the party. This consists of two representatives from each branch, one representative from each women's association, all M.Ps. and all members of the Working Committee. It is the General Committee which elects the President, Secretary, two Associate Secretaries, the Treasurer and the other committee members all of whom form the Working Committee. This election takes place at a meeting held before the Party Conference. The Working Committee is the executive authority of the party and in theory it is the General Committee which supervises and directs the executive work of the party and carries out the policy decided by the Party Conference.

The attitude of mind of the S.L.F.P. was that of a democratic party informed by some measure of evolutionary socialism. It thought of democracy as a combination of both individual and collective freedoms. By the former it meant free speech, free assembly and other like liberties. By the latter it meant freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from ignorance and the right to choose a government the public wants. It sought to protect the independence of the

Judiciary. It sought to give its rightful place to the Opposition in and outside Parliament. It recognised the rights of the workers and was convinced that democratic government was the best type of government so far devised. It declared that any attempt to ban Marxist parties was undemocratic. Democracy must be defended by democratic means. The existence of Marxist parties in a democratic society is useful, for by grafting Marxism to Democracy a democratic socialist system may be built out of them.¹³

The S.L.F.P. stood for a fair distribution of income by measures like steep death duties, excess-income duties and progressive income taxes. "All essential services including plantations and transport, banking and insurance should be progressively nationalised. This is the necessary corollary to the policy of taxing huge incomes and the control of the accumulation of too much private capital".¹⁴

"These checks on private wealth are designed to make the private sector of the economy flourish. For with the necessary controls private enterprise will be geared to an overall and comprehensive national plan and will work for the good of the lower income-groups".¹⁵

The attitude of the S.L.F.P. to Buddhism was also clear. It argued that during 400 years of non-Buddhist European rule, the rulers either through the zeal for the religion they held (e.g. the Portuguese) or to strengthen the

colonial regime (e.g. the British) perpetrated many acts and followed policies calculated to reduce Buddhism to a low level and to diminish its influence.

“Now, Buddhism has played a very important role in the lives, thoughts and actions of Sinhalese Buddhists throughout our history. It is woven into our culture, our way of life and our very thoughts and actions. So that in rebuilding our people in this new era of freedom, it is very essential to remedy the injustices done to Buddhism and to enable the Buddhists to take the fullest advantage of their religion and culture.”¹⁶ But Buddhism need not be made the state-religion. All that is necessary to achieve these objects must be done without injustice to other religions.¹⁷

The S.L.F.P. disagreed with the U.N.P.'s Indian policy. “It seems to us that the wisest course would be to abrogate (the Nehru-Kotelawala Pact) by friendly discussion, to go on with the registering of Indians who have applied for our citizenship and when that task is completed to take up the question of those who have failed to obtain our citizenship with India on a fresh basis.”¹⁸ The fresh basis the S.L.F.P. had in mind consisted in deciding on the absorbable number of Indians into Ceylon from the political, economic and social point of view and repatriating the balance to India if necessary with compensation for loss of jobs.¹⁹ The S.L.F.P. was also mindful of the minority problem in Ceylon.

“One immediate step that should be taken is to make a clear statement of fundamental rights in our constitution”.²⁰

This in brief is an outline of the attitude of the S.L.F.P. The S.L.F.P. thus informed was the largest element in the newly formed M.E.P. The radical left-wing in the M.E.P. was contributed largely by the V.L.S.S.P. The establishment of the V.L.S.S.P. is a part of the history of the left movement in the country. The consideration of the M.E.P. Manifesto should therefore wait till the story of the left movement is told.

III

The Left Movement

The early thirties of the 20th century saw Ceylon in the throes of an economic depression made worse by a malaria epidemic and floods. It was in this period that some English-educated townsmen began a Suriya Mal (Sun Flower) selling campaign as against the sale of the Remembrance Day poppy. It was a nationalist-inspired movement anxious to relieve the economic conditions of the under-privileged as well. Soon the leaders of this movement interested themselves in trade union work. A paper called the “Kamkaruwa” (Worker) was begun. Reading rooms were opened and a Workers' Education League was founded.

It was out of these social movements that the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (L.S.S.P.) was born in December 1935. It was more an

anti-colonial than an anti-capitalist party. In fact the L.S.S.P. was not called a 'Red' party till 1939.

Between the years 1935 and 1937 various organisations developed using the name Sama Samaja although they were not sponsored by the party. In 1937, however, a new constitution was adopted. Under the new constitution membership was available only to individuals and not through branches. Membership fees were to be paid to the party and not to branches. The establishment of branches was declared to be a function of party headquarters. Thus in 1937, the organisation of the party was centralised. It was still however a party mainly supported by the Sinhalese. In 1940 the party started a Tamil paper with the intention of appealing to the estate workers in the plantations.

In the years between 1935 and 1940 the L.S.S.P. came strongly under Trotskyite influence and since the 1940's remained a Trotskyite party. Under the influence of Trotskyism the L.S.S.P. declined to support the Government in prosecuting the second World War. Its members in the Legislature refused to vote for war supplies. Thus on 17.6.1940 the top leaders of the party were arrested and imprisoned.

About the same time important doctrinal differences developed among the leading members of the party. On a point of party discipline arising from the subject of war supplies certain members were expelled from

the party in 1940. These members formed themselves into the United Socialist Party in 1941 which was transformed in 1943 to the Ceylon Communist Party.

Within the parent group also further doctrinal differences came to light. In April 1941 a suggestion was placed before a secret party congress to establish a Bolshevik Leninist Party of India (B.L.P.I.) and to make the L.S.S.P. its Ceylon branch. This proposal was accepted at the secret congress of 1941 and two leading members were sent to set up the B.L.P.I. in India. Soon afterwards, on April 7 1942 to be exact, the L.S.S.P. leaders in jail escaped. In the meanwhile the B.L.P.I. idea had opened fissures in party unity. Those leaders who were in favour of the B.L.P.I. idea went to India since party work in Ceylon was in any case difficult. The rank and file of the party however were largely against this project of a B.L.P.I. At a party congress in August 1943 therefore the B.L.P.I. idea was again discussed. Several leading men of the party were in favour of it but they lost at the congress. They were, however, unwilling to accept the congress decision and so decided to break away. Thus the L.S.S.P. broke into two groups, the B.L.P.I. group which subsequently became the Bolshevik Sama Samaja Party (B.S.P.) under Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, and the original L.S.S.P. The latter under Dr. N. M. Perera and Mr. Philip Gunawardene still retained the greater part of popular support as was shown in the General Election of 1947.

The optimism created by the left swing in 1947 and the strong right of centre government of Mr. D. S. Senanayake made both the L.S.S.P. and the B.S.P. appreciate the necessity for unity between themselves. After much fruitless correspondence and some recrimination, the secretaries of the two groups drew up in August 1949, a draft agreement which proposed joint activity with the objective of subsequent unification. This was approved by the B.S.P. Central Committee at its meeting on 1.9.49. By the middle of September 1949 however it appeared that the L.S.S.P. wished the B.S.P. to join not as a group but as individuals. The B.S.P. rejected this on the ground that such a scheme was not a unification but an absorption. It was clear by then that unification was not going to be a smooth affair. In spite of these various difficulties a party convention was summoned for the 13th of May 1950 to discuss the Unity Resolution. Mr. Philip Gunawardene of the L.S.S.P. did not accept the bona fides of a certain leading member of the B.S.P. He therefore was not in favour of the Unity Resolution which in effect permitted that member to enter the L.S.S.P. Mr. Gunawardene's group however was in a minority and the Unity Resolution was passed.

Mr. Gunawardene was not willing to accept this decision. A group of his supporters requested a special convention on certain technical grounds to re-discuss the subject. The Central Committee of the L.S.S.P.

rejected this request. This was the point at which Mr. Philip Gunawardene broke away and formed the Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party (V.L.S.S.P.). This group soon afterwards formed a united front with the Communist Party—C.P. - V.L.S.S.P. United Front. In 1952 therefore from the Marxist opposition the general election was contested by the L.S.S.P. (now including the B.S.P.) and by the C.P. - V.L.S.S.P. United Front.

The L.S.S.P., newly strengthened, settled down to a narrow doctrinaire assessment of the political situation and a doctrinaire political programme. A report on the Tasks of the Party in relation to the Mass Movement 1950—included the following:

“Conditions for the overthrow of Imperialism and Capitalism have been ripe in an objective sense, the world over for a considerable period already. It is the task of every section of the Fourth International to help in its own country to bridge the gulf that exists between the historical conditions for the socialist revolution (which are already present) and the backwardness in consciousness and organisation of the masses and in particular the working-class in relation to the tasks placed before them by history. . . . Hence the task of the Party is while basing itself on the undoubted wish of the masses to make an early end of the U.N.P. regime to explain to them firstly that the effective destruction of the U.N.P. regime means the destruction of capitalism itself and that there can be

no half-way house between the U.N.P. Government and a Workers' and Peasants' Sama Samaja Government ; and secondly that the road to this latter objective lies along that of direct mass struggle alone and not through Parliamentary devices and manoeuvres."

On the basis of this theory the L.S.S.P. contested the 1952 election on the slogan "For a Workers' and Peasants' Sama Samaja Government". Although it contested 39 seats it won only 9 seats and its votes were reduced by 12,000.²¹ This defeat caused much heart-searching among certain L.S.S.P. leaders among whom were Mr. P. H. William Silva and Mr. T. B. Subasinghe. They therefore sent a resolution to the Central Committee giving their interpretation of events and of the political situation. They argued that the party did not pause to think why Trotskyism was so popular in Ceylon. The party leaders believed that this was due to the correct leadership given by them. That was not the case. It was because there were many popular demands within a capitalist system which previously the middle-class in its weakness could not organise by itself into a party. So this class looked up to the L.S.S.P. and helped it with the intention of building a popular mass party. In 1952 the Sri Lanka Freedom Party took away the supporters of these popular demands from the L.S.S.P. The aim of the L.S.S.P. should be therefore to defeat the U.N.P. by alliance with groups like the S.L.F.P. though not necessarily in a United

Front with them.²² This group recommended an alliance with the C.P. and V.L.S.S.P. as well. They asked for a broad basing of the party as a people's party carrying on the fight in unity even with middle-class parties but with a radical socialist programme.²³ This demand was rejected by the Central Committee by a majority of 7 to 5. Within a short time of this a group of L.S.S.P. members led by Mr. P. H. William Silva broke away from the L.S.S.P. and joined Mr. Philip Gunawardene's V.L.S.S.P. In the meanwhile the alliance between the C.P. and the V.L.S.S.P. had come to an end.

IV

Viplavakari Lanka Sama Samaja Party

Since its break-away from the parent L.S.S.P. the V.L.S.S.P. functioned as a political group under Mr. Philip Gunawardene's leadership. Mr. William Silva joined the group subsequently. In inspiration the V.L.S.S.P. is a Marxist party. Its leader was one of the leading members of the L.S.S.P. till 1950. Its differences with the L.S.S.P., whatever their early beginnings, hardened into doctrinal and tactical ones. The V.L.S.S.P. was greatly influenced by the victories of the Chinese Communists. Said Mr. Philip Gunawardene in 1956 : "I visited the countries of the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe and of the People's Democratic Republic of China, to obtain a deep understanding of these governments and the

changes they have brought about with the aim of establishing a progressive government in this country. . . . I understood the irreparable harm the working-class movement in this country might suffer because of the wrong leadership of the so-called Bolshevik group in association with the L.S.S.P. Every effort of mine has been directed to support a programme of action which is consonant with our national heritage, national culture and civilization." ²⁴

The V.L.S.S.P. therefore took cognisance of the cultural, linguistic and national movements in the country. In its tactical approach it was more sympathetic to the establishment of a mass-party. It sought to satisfy popular demands, if necessary, with the alliance of middle-class parties.

V

Mahajana Eksath Peramuna

This was the group which was to join hands with the S.L.F.P., the Bhasa Peramuna and several Independents to form the M.E.P. The M.E.P. was not a political party as such. It was an alliance of several groups on a common minimum programme. The Manifesto of the M.E.P. was the result.

The M.E.P. Manifesto declared that the Peramuna would seek to amend the constitution in certain respects to bring it into line with the needs of a free-country. Some of these are : "a re-consideration of the position of the Senate, the abolition of

Appointed Members, the definition of democratic and economic rights and the establishment of a democratic republic." Ceylon will seek peace in the international arena by "steering clear of involvement with power-blocs and by the establishment of friendly relations with all countries. Therefore no bases can be permitted on our country to any foreign power and all foreign troops must be immediately withdrawn from our country". The M.E.P. guaranteed "the fullest freedom of worship and conscience to all and accept the position that there shall be no discrimination on religious grounds". It "generally approved" the recommendations of the report of the Buddhist Commission of Inquiry. Sinhalese will be made the official language of the country. "This will not involve the suppression of such a minority language as Tamil whose reasonable use will receive due recognition." The M.E.P. will give top priority to the preparation of a plan of economic development. It will re-cast the taxation system to relieve the poor and the middle-class from the burden that now falls on them particularly by reason of the taxation of necessities. It will bring down the price of rice and sugar. It will "reorganise the system of education to meet to the fullest the spiritual, cultural, social and economic needs of the country." It will define the position and relationship between the Western and Ayurvedic systems of medicine and at the same time give every encouragement to the latter. In the matter of housing while assistance will be given to

private enterprise, the state must accept primary responsibility for this service. Priorities will be fixed for different classes of building, the building of people's houses getting top priority.

"We shall immediately introduce health and unemployment insurance and old-age pensions." More financial provision will be made for the existing social services. All steps necessary to increase the national wealth by improvement of agriculture will be taken by the intensive cultivation of land already under cultivation, by the opening up of uncultivated land and by the diversification of agriculture. The needs of the landless peasant will be effectively provided for by village expansion schemes and by colonisation schemes in which ownership of the land will be vested in the peasant.

"All key industries must be run by the State." Small industries can be in the hands of private enterprise. Priority will be given to agricultural and consumer industries. Steps will be taken to provide full employment on satisfactory conditions of service. Full trade union rights will be extended to workers and the M.E.P. will ensure to the workers such fundamental rights as the eight-hour working day, guaranteed minimum wages, and pension or provident fund schemes. Full trade union rights will be accorded to public servants. All steps necessary will be taken to ensure that the trade and commerce of country are in Ceylonese

hands. The M.E.P. will repeal certain repressive laws now existing. "All essential industries including foreign-owned plantations, transport, banking and insurance will be progressively nationalised".

The M.E.P. programme was a list of general proposals associated with the liberal left. Even the Tamil-owned weekly "Tribune" was constrained to say that it was a "comprehensive document which provides a progressive and democratic lead on many burning issues of the day".²⁵

VI

Lanka Sama Samaja Party

The L.S.S.P. is a Marxist party affiliated to the Fourth International. The party is bound by the decisions taken by the International from time to time. Membership is open to persons who accept the party's programme and actively participate in party work as a member of a local. Members must pay a monthly subscription as decided by the Central Committee or a District Committee and also an annual subscription fee to the International. Membership, however, is very restricted because it is only after a probationary period of about a year as a candidate that full-membership is awarded. Candidates themselves are chosen by the Central Committee or a District Committee. Candidates have all the powers of members except the right to vote and they are also generally excluded from all secret work.

The basic unit of the party is called a local. At least three party members are needed to establish a local. Locals are established on the orders of the Central Committee or a District Committee. Locals may be formed on a factory, trade or territorial basis. A local meets at least once a month and every member and candidate of the party is a member of one local or another.

The Central Committee defines what a District is. The locals in a District come under the general supervision of the District Committee. Districts have no relation to the administrative districts but are formed according to the needs of an area.

The highest body of the party in between party conventions is the Central Committee and it is elected at the Party Convention. It meets at least once a month. The Central Committee appoints an Organisational Bureau of at least three members. This body directs the day to day work of the party and has the power of the Central Committee in between the latter's meetings except with regard to policy. The Central Committee also appoints a Political Bureau of not less than 5 members. This body determines party policy in between Central Committee meetings. All decisions of the Organisational and Political Bureaus are immediately effective but are subject to review at the subsequent Central Committee meeting.

The highest body of the party is the Party Convention consisting of members and candidates. It meets annually but a Special

Convention can be summoned at the requisition of $\frac{1}{3}$ of the membership. The agenda of a Party Convention is circulated to all locals. The main topics of discussion at a Convention are the Central Committee report ; Resolution on the Political Task of the Party in the coming period and the Resolution on the Organisational Tasks of the Party in the coming year.

The principle of 'democratic centralism' operates throughout. Decisions of the Central Committee are binding on all members and the party ; those of a District Committee bind all District members ; those of a local all local members. Decisions of a local are subject to review by the Central Committee or the District Committee ; those of a District Committee by the Central Committee.

The youth leagues numbering about 700 are the peripheral organisation of the party. They are not a part of the party proper but are built round it. The membership of the party is very small. Perhaps it was not more than 200-300 in 1956. The number of candidates is even smaller.

The L.S.S.P. declares as its aims the achievement of a united free Ceylon and of establishing socialism where every person will have the fullest opportunities for development while eliminating all kinds of privileges arising from economic power and influence.²⁶ The party lays a great emphasis on economic problems. There can be

no quarrel about this but for the unfortunate exclusion of most other issues. "Our problems are the misery and starvation of the larger part of our population; agricultural poverty and industrial backwardness; low wage-levels and chronic indebtedness; ignorance and disease." ²⁷ "The real problem before the country is economic. There are no jobs to be had no matter in what language you ask them." ²⁸

The minimum demands of the L.S.S.P. were enunciated in a 14-point programme during the 1952 elections. These included withdrawal of Ceylon from the Commonwealth, abrogation of the Defence Agreements, implementation of swabasha as the official languages, granting of citizenship rights to all who wish to be permanent residents in Ceylon, repealing of repressive legislation, confiscation and nationalisation of all banks, all plantations over 250 acres in extent and bus passenger transport, the creation of a state monopoly of export-import business, fixing a ceiling of Rs. 2,000/- per month on all personal incomes, the forty-hour week, and the establishment of friendly relations with all states on the basis of respect for Ceylon's national independence. It would refuse any facilities to the imperialists in their interventionist activities in Asia and give no aid whatsoever to or get entangled in the "war-plans of the Anglo-American imperialists against the Soviet Union and her allies." ²⁹

But then in 1952 the L.S.S.P. sought a mandate to establish a "workers' and

peasants' government". In 1956 it was not so optimistic about its electoral success. It contested only 21 seats. Its primary aim was declared to be the defeat of the U.N.P. Its Manifesto was therefore coloured by this basic aim.

The L.S.S.P. Manifesto called upon the people to defeat the U.N.P. because the U.N.P. was a "completely discredited party." The U.N.P., it declared, went back on its promise to maintain the price of rice at 25 cents a measure and raised it to 70 cents. "The U.N.P. has also lost its pretence of being a national party in refusing to give official nomination to a single candidate in the Northern and Eastern provinces". The U.N.P. under Sir John "has brutally victimized the government employees' leaders and enforced stringent legislation aimed against the whole working-class". Sir John has used the army against the people for peace time civil purposes contrary to all democratic principles. Under the U.N.P. there are no houses for the poor but only schemes for the rich to invest in. It has attempted to put an end to rent-control for the sake of landlords. It has not provided a cheap bus service. There are no decent wages, no security of service and pensions for working and middle-class employees. It has not given land to the landless nor fair prices to the peasants for their produce. There is unbridled racketeering by middlemen who get all the profit out of the guaranteed price for paddy. The U.N.P. has created an

educational muddle which only benefits the rich. In health services it has completely neglected the poor. The U.N.P. far from supporting the workers' cause has helped the employers against the workers in trade union struggles. It is gifting government factories built with public funds to private profiteers. It has not won real independence for Ceylon but is establishing a growing servility to Anglo-American imperialism. There is corruption from top to bottom in public life.

The L.S.S.P. sought the votes of the people for the "principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity". All our democratic liberties are now at stake. "We have a proud record in the defence of these liberties. From the beginning we fought against feudal and caste oppression....From the beginning we fought against racial discrimination and oppression....we have ever been in the forefront of the fight whenever individual liberty has been assailed."

"The Lanka Sama Samaja Party stands firmly on the principle that every person must be free to practise his religion without interference by those who hold different or contrary views. The L.S.S.P. also stands firm on the principle of the freedom of political parties rival to itself to function when a Sama Samaja Government is in power."

It is vital, the Manifesto argued, that the L.S.S.P. should win a large number of seats. This is essential to defeat the U.N.P.;

to carry on the fight in Parliament for an anti-capitalist government; to defend the rights of the poor peasants and workers; to lead the fight to keep Ceylon united and free; and to expose the misdeeds of any capitalist government in power.

VII

Communist Party

A general idea of the attitude and policy of the Communist Party can be obtained from the Political Resolution placed before the Party Congress of May 1955. In the pages that follow is a summary of this resolution:—The Communist Party seeks to build the unity of the working classes and the democratic forces to further the struggle of the people of Ceylon. It seeks to establish a democratic government based on the unity of all anti-Imperialist and anti-U.N.P. forces, led by the working-class. The U.N.P. has not changed the basic pattern of the colonial economy. The root of the crises is that the backward colonial economy cannot sustain the growing population. The Government's "failure to solve this problem lies in its protection of the foreign imperialist monopolies that dominate Ceylon's economy and in its policy of collaboration with them as junior partner in the joint exploitation of the country". The U.N.P. has accepted as inevitable that Ceylon must remain forever a producer of agricultural raw materials. Its development schemes are planned and

executed not to disturb the dominant position of British plantations or the general export-import economy. It has encouraged the comprador section of the Ceylon capitalist class. It has strengthened the links between this class and the Imperialists. Sterling balances, Commonwealth Economic Conferences, Colombo Plan etc., have been used "to direct her economy and fiscal policy in such a way as to finance Britain's dollar deficits with America and to transfer to the people of Ceylon a part of the burdens of Britain's economic crisis".

American Imperialism is penetrating the Ceylon economy. The U.N.P. has failed to use the respite gained by the China Pact to promote trade with the socialist states and thus end the imperialist monopoly of Ceylon's economy.

The key to the expanding of Ceylon's economy lies in the confiscation of imperialist capital, the nationalisation of key sectors of the economy and in the ending of the remaining feudal relations in the countryside. Confiscation of imperialist capital will free Ceylon from imperialist control, and give her considerable resources of capital. It will give the nationals effective control of the economy making a planned economic development possible. Nationalisation and the reform of land laws will be an immense incentive to agricultural production and thus lay the foundation for industrialisation. Nationalisation of estates will make possible

the re-afforestation and the tapping of rivers in the upper reaches for multi-purpose schemes.

In foreign policy the U.N.P. is seeking to ally Ceylon with the Anglo-American war camp under the guise of fighting Communism. The Communist Party demands the withdrawal of British bases, the prohibition of Ceylon's territory and territorial waters for the use of SEATO armed forces : it demands an Asian pact based on Pancha Seela and the ending of political discrimination against China and U.S.S.R.

"The fight for a just solution of the problem of workers of Indian origin in Ceylon is an integral part of the fight for general democratic liberties. It demands the speedy disposal of their applications for registration (as citizens); the withdrawal of legal and administrative restrictions which seek artificially to reduce the number of workers registered as citizens; the liberalisation of citizenship laws and the ending of the vicious attempts at forcible expulsion of workers through reducing them to destitution, joblessness and starvation".

It urges a new delimitation of constituencies to abolish the rotten boroughs; it demands that the vote be given at 18 years of age; it demands the abolition of the Senate and of the Appointed Members in the House of Representatives.

It "calls on all party organisations in the rural areas to make a concrete study of the problems of the rural masses in that area.

and to build the unity and organization of the peasantry and the rural masses around demands such as those for the purchase of all paddy at the Government's guaranteed prices ; demands for land, irrigation works, and pasture lands for cattle ; for assistance through loans, fertilizers and seed paddy, the enforcement of the Paddy Lands Act (of 1953) ; for the abolition of feudal survivals and the extension of democracy in the countryside." ³⁰

The C.P. was not willing to accept that Ceylon was completely free. Ceylon has only a "so-called" Independence. While India has become a republic, Ceylon retains her loyalty to the Queen. ³¹ "In return for the trappings of freedom, Mr. D. S. Senanayake traded its substance when he signed the Defence Agreements permitting the occupation of Trincomalee and Katunayake by British Imperialist forces." ³²

"The C.P. welcomes, supports and works wholeheartedly for the unity of the Tamil-speaking people to fight for their cherished fundamental rights.... What we need is a unity based on a political programme.... Such a programme must demand the adoption of both Sinhalese and Tamil as official languages of Ceylon, the incorporation of a charter of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution. the adoption of a policy of economic development of the areas inhabited by the Tamil-speaking people based on the cooperation of the Tamil and Sinhalese people in a united Ceylon. This

programme involves as a first step the defeat of the present Government, and the building up of the closest ties with the democratic and progressive sections of the Sinhalese." ³³ The Federalists "offer Federation as a solution to the problems facing the Tamils but give no indication of how it is to be obtained. Instead of putting forward concrete proposals they are preaching race hatred and communalism." The Communist Party therefore offered itself to the people on these policies which it held and on the record of its activities in the past in seeking to achieve them.

These then were the major political groups apart from the Federal Party who entered the fray in 1956. The Federal Party's political philosophy and programme will be discussed subsequently. It will be clear therefore that in terms of programmes the people were offered a right of centre, a left of centre and left alternatives. This is of course to look at the parties purely from the economic point of view. As it will be seen subsequently, the economic programmes were not the sole consideration that weighed with the people. Even so they were vitally important in the general election.

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CHAPTER IV

CONSTITUENCIES AND CANDIDATES

I

The Constituencies

A total of 249 candidates came forward to contest the 89 constituencies returning 95 members to the House of Representatives. The constituencies, geographically speaking, were the same as those demarcated by the first Delimitation Commission in 1946. This Commission had followed the basic principles laid down by the Soulbury Commission on constitutional reforms.¹ The subject of representation had been the most delicate issue which faced the Soulbury Commission in 1944. The Tamils under the leadership of the Tamil Congress had campaigned vigorously for fifty-fifty. The Soulbury Commission, however, accepted a compromise formula worked out by the Ceylon Ministers which sought to give weightage and not parity to the minorities.² This formula sought to meet minority demands by giving weightage to area because the minorities mostly lived in the larger sparsely populated provinces, and by providing for 6 nominated members. The Soulbury Commission added a provision for multi-member constituencies where they would help minorities.

The Soulbury Constitution therefore provided that the House of Representatives should consist of 101 members, 95 elected and 6 nominated, to represent unrepresented interests.

The provision for weightage to area, multi-member constituencies and nominated members were the means adopted to assuage minority fears.

The degree of weightage to area was also defined. Seats were to be demarcated on a provincial basis with one seat for every 1,000 square miles and one seat for every 75,000 of population. The first Delimitation Commission created 89 constituencies—one three-member, four two-member and 84 single-member constituencies. Obviously since the population was likely to change, the constitution also provided that the size of the House should be reviewed after every census. The first Delimitation Commission used the 1931 census figures to allocate seats according to population as between provinces. But within the provinces 1946 figures were used to allocate seats in each province. A second Delimitation Commission appointed after the 1953 census ceased its work mid-way when in 1954 the membership of the House was, for a period, fixed at 105.³ The additional four members were to be elected by a special electorate under the provisions of the Indian and Pakistani (Parliamentary Representation) Act of 1954. The latter is not, however, a matter of importance for this study as the Act was not brought into operation. The essential point therefore is that the constituencies for the 1956 general election were those demarcated in 1946 partly on the basis of 1931 population figures.

When the principles of parliamentary representation as described above were settled, there were no citizenship laws in the country. The franchise was given to British subjects on the basis of either domicile or possession of a certificate of permanent settlement or the possession of certain property and literary qualifications.⁴ A rather rigid Citizenship Act was however passed in 1948. A further Act was passed in 1949 to liberalise the opportunities for citizenship available to residents of Indian and Pakistani origin. Since a preponderant majority of Indian estate labourers could not satisfy the requirements of even this Act, they did not become citizens of Ceylon. Subsequently an Act of 1949 confined the franchise to citizens of Ceylon.⁵ But the Indians constituted about 1/10 of the total population of Ceylon and were taken into consideration in demarcating constituencies although the great majority of them had no franchise.

It is obvious that it is not possible to have an exactly equal voting strength in every constituency no matter how democratic the intention of a Delimitation Commission may be. Any Delimitation Commission is bound to take into consideration factors such as community of interests, geographical contiguity, transport facilities, etc., in demarcating electorates. In Ceylon three further factors contribute to create large disparities in the voting strength of the different constituencies.

Firstly, since the population figures of 1931 were used, no account has been taken of the change of population in the last quarter of a century. Secondly, since weight-age has been given to area specially because some provinces are sparsely populated equality of voting strength is difficult to obtain. Thirdly, the number of seats allocated to certain up-country provinces depends on the large Indian population, the greater part of which has no franchise. The disparity of voting strength can be gauged from the following tables:—

Seats per province according to number of Voters—1956.

NUMBER OF VOTERS	SEATS								TOTAL	
	W.P.	S.P.	C.P.	N.P.	E.P.	Uva.	N.W.P.	N.C.P.		Sab.
Over 60,000	9									9
55-60,000	4									4
50-55,000	1	4								5
45-50,000		3					3			6
40-45,000	1	3		2			5		3	14
35-40,000	2	1	5	2			1		3	14
30-35,000		1	4	3					3	11
25-30,000			1		4			1	1	7
20-25,000	3				2	2		1		8
15-20,000				2	1	4	1	3		11
10-15,000			2							2
5-10,000			2			1				3
Below 5,000			1							1
TOTAL	20	12	15	9	7	7	10	5	10	95

Seats per Voting Strength 1947-1956.

Number of Voters	Number of Constituencies		
	1947	1952	1956
Over 60,000	0	1	9
Between 55 - 60,000	4	7	4
„ 50 - 55,000	9	3	5
„ 45 - 50,000	5	4	6
„ 40 - 45,000	5	10	14
„ 35 - 40,000	13	14	14
„ 30 - 35,000	18	14	11
„ 25 - 30,000	15	11	7
„ 20 - 25,000	6	8	8
„ 15 - 20,000	11	8	11
„ 10 - 15,000	8	10	2
„ 5 - 10,000	1	4	3
Below 5,000	0	1	1
	95	95	95

Kelaniya in the Western province was the largest single-member constituency, having a voting strength of 67,565 and Talawakele in the Central province, the smallest with a voting strength of 4,096. The average voting strength per seat in the different provinces is indicated in the Table below.

Western Province	..	52,475
Southern Province	..	46,072
Central Province	..	27,327
Northern Province	..	32,336
Eastern Province	..	24,597
Province of Uva	..	18,963
North-Western Province	..	41,204
North-Central Province	..	20,837
Province of Sabaragamuwa	..	36,770

These disparities are of consequence from at least two points of view. Large disparities go against the democratic principle of equality of electoral "pull" of the citizens. Thus assuming that all the voters voted at Talawakele and only two candidates came forward, 2,050 votes could elect a member for that seat. Under similar conditions 33,783 voters would be required to elect a member for Kelaniya. Under these artificial conditions the pull of one voter in Talawakele is as good as the pull of 16 voters in Kelaniya.

The second factor is that the weightage to area has in effect given weightage to the rural areas as against urban. It is not necessary to enter into a discussion as to the justice or otherwise of this arrangement. Its political consequence is to give the rural vote the major say in electing the government. The rural vote is by and large a Sinhalese vote; it is also a Buddhist vote. It is the section of the population most susceptible to the opinions of the vernacular educated lower-middle-class of the Buddhist clergy, the Sinhalese school teacher and the Ayurvedic doctor. It is also the section where left-wing politics of the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. have made least headway. The rural vote is not necessarily right wing either. It is a vote which would swing from right of centre to left of centre.

Of the 95 seats to be filled by election, 16 in the Northern and Eastern provinces had large Tamil-speaking (Tamil and Muslim)

majorities. Puttalam in the North-Western province also had a Muslim majority and was deemed a Muslim seat. In the three-member Colombo Central seat Muslims formed over 30 per cent. of the electorate and at least one Muslim could be elected if the Muslims so desired. In 73 constituencies the Sinhalese were in a majority. In addition, in Nawalapitiya in the Central province the Sinhalese formed about 49 per cent. of the electorate, while in Talawakele in the Central province Sinhalese formed about 40 per cent. and Tamils another 40 per cent. of the electorate. At least 30 per cent. of the voters of Colombo Central also were Sinhalese. On a language basis therefore the Sinhalese could control about 75 out of the 95 elected seats.

On a religious basis Muslims could control 5 seats, in Colombo Central, Puttalam, Pottuvil, Muttur and Kalmunai; Hindus could control 8 seats in the Northern province and 4 in the Eastern province. There were Christian majorities in Negombo, Ja-Ela and Chilaw. Christians were the largest group forming over 40% of the voters in Nattandiya in the N.W.P. and Mannar in the N.P. and could effectively control them. Buddhists were in a majority in 73 seats. The Sinhalese are the majority community of language and the Buddhists the majority community of religion. If roused to act accordingly, the Sinhalese Buddhists could control the majority of seats in the House of Representatives.

II

Candidates

Although political parties in the modern sense are of recent origin in Ceylon, the idea of party has developed an increasing hold on the public mind in the decade since Independence. One pointer to this has been the progressively decreasing numbers of Independents who have come forward to contest parliamentary elections. In 1947, 181 out of the 360 candidates were Independents; in 1952, 85 out of 303 were Independents and in 1956, 64 out of 249 were Independents. Thus in 1947 50% of the candidates were Independents; the percentage decreased to 28 in 1952 and 25 in 1956 respectively. For special reasons, in 1956, the number of Independents contesting in the Northern and Eastern provinces was large—23 to be exact. In 1947 there were 27 Independents who contested in the Northern and Eastern provinces. The major decline in the number of Independents has therefore taken place in the rest of the country—what is generally called the Sinhalese-speaking areas. In these areas the number of Independents declined from 151 in 1947 to 41 in 1956—a drop to just over 1/4 of the 1947 numbers. When it is remembered that some Independents were brought forward to split a caste vote, or to confuse the electorate with no thought of their own electoral chances; that some of the Independents were not quite normal, the number of Independents who entered the fray with serious intentions was small indeed.

The reduction in the number of Independents has led to a substantial reduction in the total number of candidates, a reduction from 360 in 1947 to 249 in 1956. Since the number of Independents came down from 181 to 64—i.e. a reduction of 117, it will be obvious that the reduction of the total number of candidates by 111 between 1947 and 1956 was basically due to this.

The second pointer to the importance of party is the increasing degree of the dependence of the candidate on his party for electoral and financial assistance. Candidates of the various major political groups depended on the party headquarters for a considerable part of the election literature. Of course this dependence varied from candidate to candidate. Generally speaking about half the volume of election literature distributed by party candidates came from party headquarters.

The preponderant majority of party candidates were financially self-supporting in their election expenses. Yet in every party list there were a number of candidates who were financially supported by the party headquarters. This was true of the U.N.P., M.E.P., L.S.S.P., F.P. and C.P. Here again the degree of assistance varied usually between 1/4 to 3/4 of the total expenses of the candidate.

The gradual elimination of Independents has had a further result. The number of candidates who have had experience of

parliamentary elections has progressively increased. The table below gives the figures of candidates who had contested previously (successfully or unsuccessfully).

	UNP	MEP	LSSP	FP	CP	TC	LP	Independents	Total
Contested									
Previously	53	38	14	10	5	1	1	23	145
Newcomers	23	22	7	4	4	0	3	41	104
TOTAL	76	60	21	14	9	1	4	64	249

Of the total number of candidates in 1956 over 58% had previous election experience. These figures do not indicate the degree of party control over candidates. Except in the L.S.S.P. and the C.P., several party candidates had obtained their electoral experience either as Independents or as candidates of a different party from the one for which they came forward in 1956. This was true of the U.N.P., M.E.P., and F.P. The figures only indicate that when a person has chosen a political career he tends to be tempted to remain in it. If the policy of the party he represents is not agreeable to him, he changes the party and only rarely does the party change the candidate. Party stratification is not great and movement from one to another is not uncommon. This is largely because, except in the L.S.S.P. and the C.P., the parties are dominated by and centre round their parliamentary members. The nucleus of the non-Marxist parties are the M.Ps. or the ex-M.Ps. In the case of the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. the nuclei are the leaders who, proving Michel's oligarchic law, remain leaders whether they are M.Ps. or not.

It is very difficult to obtain information about candidates since the parties are not very well organised at the secretariat level. Party headquarters do not supply biographical details about candidates. Candidates themselves are too busy fighting the election to fill in questionnaires. Investigators find it difficult to obtain information for the same reason. Even so, a large number of candidates answered the questionnaires sent out for this study. This information was supplemented from various sources. The information on which the subsequent facts are derived is therefore basically sound although a minor error may creep in here and there.

The Table below analyses the candidates according to age as at 1956.

AGE	PARTY								Total
	UNP	MEP	LSSP	CP	FP	TC	LP	Independents	
21-29	—	4	4	—	4	—	1	2	15
30-39	11	16	6	3	1	—	—	15	52
40-49	28	20	8	4	4	—	1	17	82
50-59	25	12	3	1	5	1	1	13	61
Over 60	7	2	—	—	—	—	1	2	12
Information not available	5	6	—	1	—	—	—	15	27
TOTAL	76	60	21	9	14	1	4	64	249

As at 1956, even allowing for the candidates for whom no information is available, it will be seen that more than 2/3rds of the candidates were below the age of fifty. And most of the candidates seemed to seek a political career after the age of thirty.

A clear majority of the candidates of the U.N.P., M.E.P., L.S.S.P., C.P. and Independents were within the 30-50 age group. But the bulk of the U.N.P. and F.P. candidates came from the 40-60 age-group. About half the over-50 candidates were members of the U.N.P.

A little less than half the candidates had had some local government experience either as members or as chairmen of local government bodies. The table below gives the figures under different parties. It is fair to assume that the other candidates did not have local government experience, although some allowance must be made for possible incompleteness of information.

U.N.P.	M.E.P.	L.S.S.P.	C.P.	F.P.	L.P.	T.C.	INDEPENDENTS
36	29	11	6	3	2	0	20

About half the U.N.P., M.E.P. and L.S.S.P. candidates had had local government experience. The figures show more than 1/2 for the C.P. and less than 1/2 for the F.P. It is interesting that more party candidates tended to graduate from local government than Independents.

Subsequent chapters of this study will show that the major issues on which the election was fought were the economic burdens of the under-privileged and the national, cultural and religious demands in the expounding of which the vernacular-educated lower middle-class supplied the vanguard. Even so, the candidates by and

large came from that section of the community which had had an English education. The table below indicates the educational qualifications of the candidates according to party.

ENGLISH	U.N.P.	M.E.P.	L.S.S.P.	C.P.	F.P.	L.P.	T.C.	INDEP.
University & Professional	30	17	11	6	10	—	1	20
Teacher's Training Schools	—	4	1	1	—	—	—	1
Above G.C.E. Level	16	17	5	—	2	2	—	16
Below G.C.E. Level	5	6	2	1	—	—	—	3
Sinhalese/Tamil	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2
Information not available	25	15	2	1	2	2	—	22
TOTAL	76	60	21	9	14	4	1	64

There is reason to believe that a good many of the candidates about whom reliable information is not available also had had some education in English. This assumption could be made from the information about the schools which the candidates attended during their school career. The table below lists the schools under two grades—the collegiate schools regarded as the top-grade and other collegiate schools. These also were English-medium schools prior to the gradual implementation of swabasha. Even when the swabasha was made the medium

of instruction in the lower classes, an education in English continued to be given in them. Vernacular schools are not included in this list.

	U.N.P.	M.E.P.	L.S.S.P.	C.P.	F.P.	L.P.	INDEP.
Top Grade Collegiate	50	30	13	6	10	2	21
Other Collegiate	17	12	5	1	4	1	16
Information not available	9	18	3	2	—	1	27
TOTAL	76	60	21	9	14	4	64

Even with the limited information available it is clear that at least 75% of the candidates had attended what are popularly called English-medium collegiate schools. Since some of the candidates for whom no information is available are also likely to have attended such schools, the percentage must be even higher. In the case of each party, the majority of the candidates had been educated at the top-collegiate English-medium schools. In the case of the U.N.P., L.S.S.P., C.P. and F.P. nearly 2/3 of the candidates had had a top-collegiate education. The M.E.P. percentage was a little less being only about 1/2. Nearly 40% of the U.N.P. candidates had a University or Professional training. The percentages for other parties are as follows: M.E.P. 27%; L.S.S.P. 50%; C.P. 66%; and the F.P. 71%.

The occupational distribution of the candidates also indicates that they were by and large from the well-to-do section of the community.

Occupation or Main source of Income	PARTY							
	U.N.P.	M.E.P.	L.S.S.P.	C.P.	F.P.	T.C.	L.P.	INDEP.
Legal Profession	23	8	6	—	7	1	—	8
Ownership of land & Commerce, Trade	39	31	6	1	3	—	1	21
Western Medical Profession	2	—	1	1	1	—	—	1
Ex-Public Servants of middle & higher grades	4	2	1	—	1	—	1	4
Teaching (English medium)	2	9	4	5	1	—	—	6
Journalism	—	4	—	—	1	—	—	1
Ayurvedic Medicine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Middlegrade self employment or in private sector	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Wife	2	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
Full-time political workers	—	2	1	1	—	—	—	—
Minor Employments	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Information not available	4	—	1	1	—	—	2	15
TOTAL	76	60	21	9	14	1	4	64

It will be seen therefore that from the point of view of education and occupation the preponderant majority of the candidates came from the middle-middle and upper-middle classes.

Parliamentary leadership therefore continues to remain in the hands of this class. This is interesting because governmental policies are bound to be a compromise between the social demands of the under-privileged as understood and interpreted by the English-educated middle-class. This situation of course will not last for ever. The swabasha movement is likely to bring about a further shift towards the lower-middle-class though it is difficult to say by how much.

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CHAPTER V.

THE ISSUES

I

Language

Rarely is an election fought on one issue only. Even so one issue can either dominate an election or at least be thought dominant. There is no doubt that in the weeks previous to the dissolution of Parliament, language was thought to be one such issue. Many observers of the political scene then came to the conclusion that the acceptance of the Sinhala Only policy by the U.N.P. would bring it electoral victory. Even the most sanguine opposition hopes did not go so far as to expect the complete defeat of the U.N.P. that the elections were to show. Even the L.S.S.P. which was at pains to show that the language issue was less important than others, accepted the fact that the popular mind was dominated by it.

It was seen earlier that till about January 1956, the U.N.P. stood by its parity policy. When the Sinhala Only campaign in the country grew to be almost irresistible the U.N.P. decided to make a dramatic gesture of concession to a popular demand and seek a mandate to implement it. By the time the U.N.P. decided to accept Sinhala Only however, the S.L.F.P., V.L.S.S.P., the Bhasa Peramuna and several politicians of various other political persuasions had already

decided for Sinhala Only. From the U.N.P. point of view therefore, the mere acceptance of Sinhala Only was not enough although the acceptance of Sinhala Only itself had to be justified. The U.N.P. Manifesto declared that it would make Sinhalese the official language if it were returned to power. No mention was made in the Manifesto of the place that Tamil would have in such a scheme of things. What was omitted in the Manifesto, however, was sought to be made good in several election speeches. The Prime Minister declared in February that when Sinhalese was made the official language, other languages would not be overlooked.¹ In March again he pointed out that the State belongs to everyone and not to the Sinhalese only. Yet, he added, anyone who wished to be a member of the public service should know Sinhalese. There would be a place for English also though Sinhalese would be made the official language.² Mr. Shirley Corea, a Minister in the Kotelawala Government, was at pains to show that the substitution of Sinhalese in place of English as the official language was not going to harm the Tamil language in any way. Tamil would have almost the same position as before. "You will be free," he told a Tamil audience, "to have your education in Tamil and generally to use Tamil as in the past."³

Defining the opportunities for Tamil, even though vaguely, was only one aspect. The other was to justify the stand on Sinhala

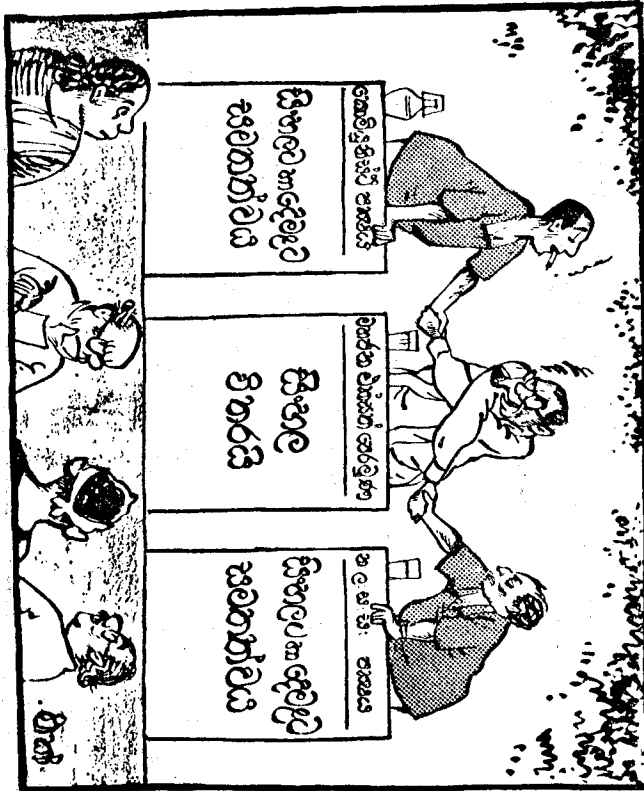
Only. Sir John argued in February 1956 that the granting of parity of status for both languages would mean the end of Sinhalese as a language as well as a race. Parity for both languages, he argued, would mean that Sinhalese students would have to learn Tamil and vice versa; and when it came to higher education, the Sinhalese would have to qualify in Tamil as there were not enough Sinhalese books. That would be the death-knell of the Sinhalese. There were countries like Britain where the language of the majority had been adopted as the official language and where the minorities had studied the language of the majority. So there was no reason why Tamils could not learn Sinhalese.⁴ One of the other U.N.P. arguments in favour of Sinhala Only was that parity would permanently divide the two people with no hope of unity. If parity were granted Ceylon would in time form a part of South India. It is not possible to run a country or a government efficiently in two languages.⁵

When it was known that the U.N.P. was proposing to accept Sinhala Only, the Sinhala Only enthusiasts had urged the Government to prove its bona fides by amending the Constitution before going to the polls. Even after the resignation of the U.N.P. Tamil M.P.s, the U.N.P. strength in the House was 54. Opposition M.P.s numbering 16 also offered their votes to the U.N.P. to obtain the 2/3rd majority required to amend the Constitution to provide for Sinhala Only. The U.N.P., however, refused to accept this



LANKADIPA 21.3.56.

offer but asked for a mandate with a 2/3rd majority in the House. The Opposition sought to prove that it was certain that the U.N.P. would not win the 68 seats it asked for. If the U.N.P. came to power but without the 2/3rd majority, the Opposition argued, English would retain its place. "Now do you see," the Opposition argument went, "how the U.N.P. will be guiltless for not implementing Sinhala Only and how the Sinhalese electorate will be guilty of treachery to the U.N.P." This kind of campaign put the U.N.P. very much on the defensive. Language, the U.N.P. therefore argued, was not an election trump card which it had kept up its sleeve. It was a national problem. "As such," the U.N.P. declared, "we approached it in the only democratic way by seeking a mandate from the country."⁶ The U.N.P. also asked for the people's votes on the ground that it was the only party which could implement Sinhala Only. Mr. Bandaranaike, the U.N.P. argued, could not solve the language problem with the help of the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. who stood for parity.⁷ Besides, it argued, Mr. Bandaranaike had been a supporter of parity not long before and so had his close associates. The U.N.P. also drew attention to the fact that by accepting Sinhala Only it lost all Tamil support. Since all the Tamils left the U.N.P. after its new language stand, all the Sinhalese should rally round the U.N.P.⁸ A vote for the Opposition it argued was a vote for Tamile



DINAMINA 25.2.56.

The M.E.P. language position was essentially that of the S.L.F.P. As early as September 1955 the S.L.F.P. language policy had been clearly stated thus:— “The problem really is to afford protection to the language of the majority i.e. Sinhalese while being reasonably fair to the language of the minority i.e. Tamil..... We feel that this is not a task that is difficult to achieve. Sinhalese can be made the only official language of the country while in Parliament, the administration, judiciary, and in education (the latter three particularly in the Northern and Eastern provinces) the use of Tamil can be permitted. Sinhalese can be substituted for the official position occupied by English at present while Tamil can be permitted to be used as the Swabasha is used now. Such a course while allaying the fears of the Sinhalese should reasonably satisfy the demands of the Tamils and at the same time ensure the essential unity of the country.”⁹ The task of working out in detail the position accorded to Tamil in these various spheres, as well as the position of English were matters to be examined by means of a comprehensive investigation.¹⁰ The S.L.F.P. disagreed with the policy of making Tamil a regional language while Sinhalese was made the official language because “such a policy would inevitably lead to Federalism”.

While the S.L.F.P. was willing to accord to Tamil a fair and reasonable place in the language set up, it raised several arguments against the policy of parity. It was pointed

out that the fears of the Sinhalese with regard to parity were justified. There were only 5 to 6 million people in the world who spoke Sinhalese while 40-50 million spoke Tamil. Tamil has a literature, magazines, papers, films etc., far in advance of what is available in Sinhalese. Parity might therefore lead to the gradual shrinking and even final elimination of Sinhalese. Those who were demanding parity, the S.L.F.P. argued, knew only English. Parity would prevent the Tamils from learning Sinhalese and English would remain the medium of communication. Granting of parity would also strengthen the hands of those who demanded Federalism. The country needed peace, amity and friendship and a single official language would facilitate these.¹¹

The S.L.F.P. was not unaware of the criticism that its leader had once supported a motion which amounted to parity. It was argued that Mr. Bandaranaike acquiesced in such a motion chiefly because in 1944 the issue was really between English and Swabasha.¹² Besides there was then no demand for Federalism and it was thought that the Indian Tamils could be sent back.¹³

In the campaign, however, that part of the language policy which mentioned reasonable use of Tamil was rarely mentioned. The reason was of course quite simple. The M.E.P. was fighting the U.N.P. which stood for Sinhala Only in constituencies where the Sinhalese were in a preponderant majority. There was no political necessity to expound its fairness to the Tamil language.

When both the U.N.P. and the M.E.P. were offering Sinhala Only, the issue became more a matter of the capabilities of each to deliver the goods and/or the bona fides of each. The U.N.P. claimed that it only could implement it. The M.E.P. questioned the sincerity of the U.N.P. and offered to make Sinhalese the official language within 24 hours.

The L.S.S.P. and the C.P. had from the beginning supported the policy of parity. When the Sinhala Only movement was gaining strength, the L.S.S.P. leader, Dr. N. M. Perera, gave notice of a motion in the House of Representatives urging that the constitution should be amended to give parity of status to both Sinhalese and Tamil. An L.S.S.P. meeting held to explain its parity policy was broken up in October 1955. Even so the L.S.S.P. parity motion was taken up for debate on the 19th of October and Dr. N. M. Perera placed his party's arguments in favour of parity before the House. The L.S.S.P. thought that the Sinhala Only policy would break the country into two, while parity would help to unite the country. Sinhala Only, the L.S.S.P. thought, would by dividing the country wreck its independence and stability. On the other hand, parity would not destroy Sinhalese as the latter was a strong language.

As the Sinhala Only movement gathered strength, the L.S.S.P. underplayed its parity policy. It urged that there were more pressing problems than language and these

should be solved first.¹⁴ It argued that the language problem should not be approached in haste or in a hurry. Great men like the Prime Minister of India, it added, were handling the question of language with great caution. "The Morning Times" quoted Dr. N. M. Perera as saying that the problem should be solved with the utmost caution as it affected a large section of minorities. If the issue was decided in haste the country might be divided. The Tamils in the North and East would seek aid from India and there would be chaos in the country. That was why the L.S.S.P. did not wish to take a hasty decision as it should be done after consideration gradually within 10 to 15 years.¹⁵

The L.S.S.P. is a Marxist party believing in revolutionary, radical and speedy change. The language problem was the one issue which it thought should be solved with much care, consideration and caution over a period of time. On the other hand the L.S.S.P. pointed out that it was a party which stood for swabasha. It argued that the representatives of the L.S.S.P. had as early as 1935 made demands on the swabasha principle when others were still kow-towing to English. It urged that the U.N.P. had no intention of implementing Sinhala Only. The U.N.P., it declared, was in secret alliance with certain Tamil Independents. If the U.N.P. were to come to power, these Independents would rejoin the U.N.P. and continue to keep English as the language of administration.¹⁶

“The L.S.S.P. was the first party to demand swabasha and the allegations that it was against Sinhalese were false.”¹⁷

The L.S.S.P. was at pains to urge that the language issue was deliberately brought out into the country as an election trump-card by the U.N.P. When the U.N.P. learnt of the S.L.F.P. - L.S.S.P. no-contest agreement by means of which they were likely to come to power, the U.N.P. thought of the language issue to return to power. The U.N.P. was using the language slogan to make the people forget the Government's anti-people policies and the August hartal. The L.S.S.P. also gave prominence in its Sinhalese journal to speeches of Sinhala Only leaders which were favourable to the L.S.S.P. At an L.S.S.P. meeting at Nugegoda, the Ven. Mapiṭigama Buddhakkita Thero of the Eksath Bhikkshu Peramuna declared that in the language struggle their effort was directed against the U.N.P. “It is not from the L.S.S.P. that our language should be protected but from the U.N.P. We shall give every assistance to promote an L.S.S.P. victory (at Kotte).” This item was made headline news in the Sinhalese edition of their party paper.¹⁸

The daily papers also reported the assistance given by Sinhala Only parties to the L.S.S.P. The “Dinamina” reported Mr. Bandaranaike at Waskaduwa thus:— “The left parties are not against giving primacy of place to Sinhalese. They want to make swabasha the official language(s) in the

country. The U.N.P. wants to give primacy of place to English. Therefore the party of poison in this country is the U.N.P.”¹⁹ The L.S.S.P. language propaganda took up the following positions.

1. Do not divide the country.
2. Be cautious in deciding the language issue.
3. There are other more fundamental and pressing problems to solve.
4. The L.S.S.P. is not against Sinhalese.
5. It stands for swabasha while the U.N.P. is for English.

During the election-campaign period i.e. from the dissolution to polling, the L.S.S.P.'s party journals did not make any mention of its specific policy of parity. Nor was it mentioned in its Manifesto.

The Communist Party's views on language were a clear statement of policy. Its language programme declared that in her external relations with other states, the state of Ceylon should conduct her affairs in Sinhalese. Both Sinhalese and Tamil should be used in Parliament. All laws, government publications, currency notes etc., should be in both languages. In basically Sinhalese-speaking areas the courts and the administration should be in Sinhalese, while they should be in Tamil in basically Tamil-speaking areas. A system of interpretation and translation should be established to enable people speaking the other language to transact their business with the Government and the courts in their own languages.²⁰

Thus the C.P. was for parity in one sense that it stood for both languages being made official languages. It also stood for primacy of place for Sinhalese in that the C.P. recognised it as the language of the majority. The C.P. was opposed to Sinhala Only if by that was meant the forcing of Sinhalese on Tamils. The Communist Party did not hesitate to state its views on language during the election campaign. Its Sinhalese paper 'Mawbima' specifically argued that Tamil and Sinhalese should both be officially recognised.²¹

The C.P. argued that it stood for swabasha in the sense described above, while the U.N.P. stood for English. This inclination for English in the U.N.P., it declared, was due to the political and economic influence of Britain in Ceylon.²² The C.P. pointed out the unfair consequences of the existing language position. The highest office which a person who knew only Sinhalese could obtain was that of a village headman or a vernacular school teacher. Even then the English-medium teacher got a higher scale of pay. Sinhalese-educated people were denied entry into the professions and higher education was closed to them.

It argued that the Sinhala Only policy of the U.N.P. was merely an election trick. This was obvious, the C.P. added, when it was realised that the U.N.P. had done little to lay the foundation for Sinhalese Only.²³

As the language debate raged high it was difficult to keep in check the intensity of

communal feeling. Sinhala Only enthusiasts recalled the early chapters of Ceylon's history when Tamil invasions were the bane of the country. Some argued that from about 300 B.C. Sinhalese culture and the arts had suffered heavily at Tamil hands. To ask for parity they urged was to destroy the Sinhalese root and branch.²⁴ The greatest danger to Sinhalese was from Tamil.²⁵ Even when Tamil kings reigned in Ceylon Sinhalese was given pride of place.²⁶ Every minority group in Ceylon has another country to look forward to but not the majority Sinhalese.²⁷

In spite of this intensity of communal feeling it would be a mistake to ignore the economic and cultural forces behind the language movement. It was urged that there is a fundamental class division in Ceylon—the English-educated in the upper circles with the Sinhalese-educated as hewers of wood and drawers of water.²⁸ Black Englishmen, it was argued, ruled the country and English was required for everything while thousands of Sinhalese-educated were unemployed. It was the upper-class Sinhalese who opposed Sinhala Only. Without Sinhalese as the official language there would be no national art or culture. Without Sinhalese there would be no Buddhism in Ceylon.²⁹

II

Buddhism

The intensity of feeling evoked by the great debate on language was fairly easy of measurement, because the national press covered it most adequately. Although the

Buddhist issue itself was not equally well covered by the press, it was a subject which evoked no less an emotional feeling. The history of the Buddhist revival in Ceylon goes back to the 19th century. Its most recent phase began with the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry by the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress on the 2nd of February, 1954. Its aim was to examine the current state of Buddhism in Ceylon. The opportunity however was taken to place the Buddhist point of view before the country and to obtain the enthusiasm and religious fervour of Buddhists to support Buddhist demands. The Commission of Inquiry sent out a questionnaire in reply to which 1713 memoranda were received. It held sittings at 37 centres where over 1800 laymen and 700 bhikkus gave evidence. Each sitting was preceded by a fanfare of publicity, traditional ceremonies, and public meetings. Throughout 1954 and 1955 therefore the Buddhists in the country were given a cause to fight and the ammunition to fight it with under good generalship.

The Commission of Inquiry presented its report to the country at a meeting held on February 4th 1956—Independence Day. Its report is even today the most comprehensive statement of the Buddhist position. This statement was carried to every nook and corner of Buddhist Ceylon by the bhikkus, the more active of whom had by that time organised themselves into the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna (E.B.P.)—the United Bhikkhu

Front. If the E.B.P. became the vehicle of Buddhist opinion—the opinion itself was that summarised by the Report of the Commission of Inquiry.

The first 87 pages of the report gave the Buddhist view of the history of Buddhism during the period of colonial rule—a period of over 450 years. As the Report saw it, it was indeed a sorry tale. It recalled the authoritarian methods by means of which the first invaders—the Portuguese—introduced Catholicism to Ceylon. Roman Catholic Portuguese destroyed and looted Buddhist temples and erected Catholic churches in their place.³⁰ With the arrival of the Dutch, the Catholics themselves were put to cruel oppression. Only the kindness and tolerance of Buddhists saved many Catholics from Dutch deprivations.³¹ The Dutch too sought to promote their religion by denying state-employment to persons of other religions and imposing special fines on them.³²

Under British rule, Christianity of any denomination was promoted as much for political as for religious reasons. They saw in the destruction of Buddhism the surest way of undermining the Sinhalese kingdom in the hill-country. The Report quoted at length a memorandum from Governor Maitland suggesting ways and means of destroying Buddhism by creating jealousies and rivalries within the Buddhist clergy.³³ They also sought to wean away the Catholics

from their loyalty to Sinhalese kings and so from 1806 onwards toleration was extended to Catholics in British ruled provinces.³⁴

There was also the religious reason. Men like William Wilberforce of the British Parliament were anxious to spread Christianity among the newly conquered lands. The Governors of Ceylon appreciated that education was the surest medium for the task.

Under British rule therefore, the ancient pattern of education in temple schools was allowed to decay. Education was given in schools which were either run by the state or by Christian religious denominations. In either case Christians controlled the educational system. Higher education was confined to the English medium. Even the vernacular schools were dominated by Christians. Various administrative and policy decisions put enormous obstacles in the way of the Buddhists establishing schools in either the English or the Sinhalese medium. This control of education was utilised to proselytise Buddhist children. In course of time it enabled the Christians to dominate the public life of the country and the leading educational institutions of the country. The larger part of the educational vote spent on state-maintained schools goes to schools which are Christian-managed though the majority of the pupils are Buddhist or Hindu. In this way not merely Christian children but even Buddhist children are educated in a Christian atmosphere. The Buddhist Commission Report therefore demanded that all state-maintained

schools should be taken over from denominational management; that new schools should be put up by the state and not by religious denominations; that the proselytisation of persons under 21 should be made a punishable offence; that while any religious denomination should have the right to establish schools, such schools should not be maintained by the state and that children of other religious denominations should not be allowed in these schools.

The Buddhist Commission Report argued that the Christian Missions used their control over education to build a western-orientated society while the Buddhists aimed at reviving national culture and religion. The values of the English-educated who have embraced western Christian culture are entirely different from those of the common people.³³ Today, the Buddhist Commission Report declared, individual success is measured by power, wealth and knowledge of techniques. Character and virtue are of no account.³⁴ The basis of modern western civilization is Christianity; its pattern is materialistic. The basis of Ceylon's ancient civilization was Buddhistic, its pattern was that of the spirit. The economic ills of our modern society are the result of the materialistic bases on which it is built. Men seek to accumulate wealth by means desirable or undesirable. In such a society gambling and racing become honoured sports. In a society seeking wealth and power and not virtue, it is surprising that any virtue remains. So till we turn away

from the Christian materialistic civilization it is meaningless to attempt to reform society.³⁵ So long as wealth is the aim of our striving, there will be no solution to our economic and social problems. Virtue must succeed to the place of wealth. We must build a society based on Buddhist civilization.

Those who took power in 1948 (the U.N.P.) were men who had been educated during the colonial regime and were inclined towards the latter's culture and civilization and in many ways Europeanised though Sinhalese in name. They took no steps and showed no sympathy towards the national reconstruction that had to be undertaken after Independence. Their daily life and environment are completely alien to our national outlook and values.³⁶

The Christian and materialistic western civilization has made drunkards, thieves, lechers, liars and murderers out of our people. It was under Buddhism that Ceylon reached a high level of decent and cultured living.³⁷ This Government has set up Christianity on our throne. It subsidises Christian organisations. Our sick are handed over to Catholic nursing sisters who are pledged to propagate their faith. The Catholic Church increases its ever-accumulating wealth not only by fleecing the faithful, but also by indulging in commercial activities. Our Government appears to give the kernel to the Catholics and the husk to the Buddhists.³⁸ These in brief were some of the general arguments of the Buddhists which were carried to the country in succulent detail by the E. B. P.

III

The Economic Issues.

The economic issues on which the general election was fought were as much if not more important than those of language and Buddhism. The economic issues centred round the acts both of commission and omission of the Government. The first group consisted of the economic burdens which the Government placed on the people in 1953. The U.N.P. had fought the 1952 election on a series of promises, one of which was that the price of a measure of rice would remain at 25 cents. The government had been able to sell the rice ration at 25 cents a measure only at the cost of a heavy annual subsidy as the world price of rice was very much higher. Soon after its resounding victory in 1952, however, the Government met with serious financial difficulties. The government decided to face these difficulties by, among other things, removing the rice subsidy and the free-midday meal (buns) to school children, by raising the price of sugar and by doubling the rate of internal letter postage. The price of rice shot up to 70 cents a measure. Public indignation was enormous and in August 1953 a hartal was staged. Although the government acted firmly and put down this direct action, it was at the cost of some life and a great loss of popularity. The opposition therefore made capital out of these acts of the Government.

In several places Sir John was greeted with stringed buns. A statement from a U.N.P. journal of 1952 declaring that the price of rice would remain at 25 cents a measure was printed as an opposition pamphlet. The Eksath Bhikkshu Peramuna published a pamphlet showing how a poor family had to pay Rs. 365/- extra on rice alone during the previous four years of U.N.P. rule. It argued that instead of taxing the petrol of the rich, the U.N.P. came down upon the poor. The L.S.S.P. took the rice issue as one of the fundamental issues on which the election would be fought. The Opposition saw to it that the people did not forget the burdens which the Government had imposed or the loss of life they bore in the hartal.

The U.N.P. tried hard to meet this criticism. It argued on the one hand that the price of rice was raised when Mr. Dudley Senanayake was Prime Minister and that a reduction had been made under Sir John. It produced statistics to show the enormous subsidy the Government had paid for rice during the years 1947-1953. The U.N.P. Government, it declared, sold rice at 25 cents a measure till the country became almost bankrupt and while the people of other countries paid three times or four times that price. "As a result of the depression we (U.N.P.) had to remove the subsidy. We did not raise the price to 70 cents a measure. We gave at 70 cents what we bought at 90 cents. And then the Kotelawala Government reduced this price to 55 cents." ³⁹

The Opposition also raised economic issues on the basis of what the Government had not done. The basis of these criticisms did not require much serious thought. The gap between the real Ceylon and the ideal felicitous Ceylon was laid at the door of U.N.P. misrule. Under U.N.P. rule it was argued, the country had become poorer, education was in chaos; crime was increasing; rural and urban unemployment had increased. Health conditions were lower than under the colonial regime; there was inadequate housing; the national wealth was wasted; public money was spent as if by men run mad; the Treasury was exhausted on Ministerial travels and carnivals. ⁴⁰ There was no milk for the poor children and no play-grounds for the city children. ⁴¹

The U.N.P. replied with its record of wardship of the affairs of state. It claimed that under the U.N.P. the Government had eradicated malaria, raised the expectancy of life from 27 to 57 years; reduced the rate of infant mortality; built large numbers of houses and flats for the middle-class; acquired and allocated land for the landless; and home-builders were assisted with loans. It declared that major irrigation schemes were undertaken to develop 240,000 acres of land. It had paid a record price for paddy; undertaken the replanting of large tracts with rubber; brought about a tremendous expansion in education; supplied the cheapest rail and road transport in Asia. ⁴² It claimed that a hundred village irrigation

schemes were completed in the previous year; that 135,000 peasant families had been settled in allotments; that paddy cultivators were assisted to the extent of Rs. 10 million; that plantation production had doubled and estate workers had doubled their wages.⁴³

IV

Other Issues

Democracy vs. Fascism

The opposition also campaigned on the argument that a victory for the U.N.P. was a victory for Fascism. The L.S.S.P. argued that the U.N.P. was slowly transforming Ceylon into a fascist state. The U.N.P., they claimed, was undemocratic because it rejected every motion brought forward by the Opposition irrespective of its merits.⁴⁴ It had denied trade union rights to public servants.⁴⁵ It had "passed repressive legislation to throttle the trade union movement; created secret police-squads," and was "moving towards a police state under the personal dictatorship of Sir John Kotelawala."⁴⁶

The U.N.P., on the other hand, replied that it was "the only Party which stands for true democracy and which can respect and assure your rights of conscience and your rights as individuals and citizens. It is the only party which is strong enough in numbers and in principle to ensure security and stability for yourselves and your children."⁴⁷

Stability

One of the strongest arguments used in favour of the U.N.P. was that it was the only party capable of giving the country a stable government. Under U.N.P. rule it was pointed out that Ceylon enjoyed good government, peace and tranquillity. The way Ceylon had prospered and progressed should be a matter of pride to the whole of Asia. This line of argument was given much weight in the pro-U.N.P. daily press. Economic development, a Sinhalese daily commented, required a stable government. Foreign aid was necessary for economic development and foreign aid would be available only if Ceylon possessed a stable government.⁴⁸ The alternative to the U.N.P. was M.E.P. rule. But the M.E.P. would not provide a stable government. The M.E.P. was an *achcharu* (pickle) "of those who are for unrestricted emigration from India and of those who do not want to die till the last Indian leaves the shores of this island; of those who are for Buddhism and Buddhism only and of those who are against all religions; of those for Sinhala Only and of those against; of those for Mr. Bandaranaike and of those for themselves." Mr. Bandaranaike wanted to be Prime Minister; the L.S.S.P. wanted to form the Government and the C.P. wanted to run it.⁴⁹ The friendship pact between the S.L.F.P. and the L.S.S.P. was a marriage between foxes and chickens.⁵⁰

Marxism

The U.N.P. asked the people not to vote for Marxists because Marxism meant one party government ; it was against religion ; it would liquidate its opposition no sooner it got to power ; Marxists were for unrestricted immigration from India ; they believed in the argument of force and not in the force of argument ; their first loyalty was to Soviet Russia and Red China and not to Ceylon ; they could not form a government and they would not allow anyone else to do so either ; they were never united, they split after every general election ; their leaders were Communists in public and capitalists in private and they were men of words not of deeds.⁵¹ If the U.N.P. had not been governing this country since Independence Ceylon would have become a part of India as the Sama Samajists and Communists were prepared to sell this land to South India in the past. The L.S.S.P. leaders were more interested in Indians than in Sinhalese as they intended to gain power with the support of Indians.⁵²

Cultural Conflict

There was one issue which only the M.E.P. raised—that was the issue of national culture. This approach was strongly supported by the E.B.P. and by Buddhists in general. The U.N.P. was charged with acting in a manner which destroyed the national culture. A U.N.P. victory, the S.L.F.P. paper, “Sinhale” wrote, would spell the defeat of “everything national and this country would be

another U.S.A. The U.N.P. must be defeated to build a Government favourable to national culture.⁵³ Wrote the Bauddha Peramuna “Most of the U.N.P. candidates don’t know a word of Sinhalese ; they speak it with a Cinnamon Gardens accent. They are experts at ball-room dancing and practised in cocktail parties ; they don’t care a dime for religion or morals. They prefer top-hats and coat-tails. They are capitalists who can be called “Engalanka”^b people. The idea that only top-hatted people who can speak English with the proper accent are fit to govern is one which grew up in colonial days. If Ceylon is to be governed in Sinhalese in the future these Engalanka people are not fit for the task.⁵⁴

The Senanayakes

The U.N.P. had been built under Mr. D. S. Senanayake’s leadership. His son, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, and his nephew, Mr. R. G. Senanayake, were Ministers of U.N.P. Governments. In the years previous to 1956, especially in the 1952 campaign, all these facts were used against the U.N.P. as proof of family bandyism. The U.N.P. was nicknamed the Uncle-Nephew Party. It was pilloried as the “Unge Neyinge Paksaya (their relations’ party). But the resignation of Mr. Dudley Senanayake from the U.N.P. and immediate active politics in early 1956 was used by the Opposition to beat the Government.

^a A periodical—Buddhist inspired.

^b A hybrid from England and Lanka (Ceylon).

Mr. Dudley Senanayake, it must be mentioned, had always been a liberal leader. Even the Opposition praised his liberal virtues. Mr. R. G. Senanayake had won a country-wide popularity on his determination to enter into the Rubber-Rice pact with China in 1952/53. The Opposition argued that Mr. Dudley Senanayake resigned as a protest against the anti-democratic policies of the U.N.P. under Sir John. Mr. R. G. Senanayake resigned from the Cabinet and was subsequently expelled from the U.N.P. because of his open campaign against his cabinet colleague, Mr. J. R. Jayewardene. It is more than likely that there was much personal antipathy between Messrs. R. G. Senanayake and J. R. Jayewardene. Mr. R. G. Senanayake went to the country, however, on other issues. He claimed to have resigned from the Cabinet to save the country from Americans and Indians. The Opposition campaign centred round these public issues. Its slogan asked why the people should want the U.N.P., despised now even by the Senanayakes.

These arguments were given point and substance by some unpopular actions and intemperate words of Sir John Kotelawala. His Government rushed an amendment to the Constitution to enable certain persons found guilty of corrupt practices at elections to contest in 1956 by reducing the debarred period. His Government undertook a campaign to stop the illicit growth of opium in the south of Ceylon. The army which was

used for the task acted in a manner which brought forth a storm of protest. His Government dismissed certain office-bearers of public servants' trade unions and deported the foreign wife of a citizen on the argument that she was a Communist spy. Sir John himself referred to certain anti-U.N.P. Buddhist priests as "rogues in yellow robes"; he once declared that some of them should be buried alive. At the height of the campaign he declared that he would be Prime Minister even if he won only 10 seats. The Opposition therefore was very much on the offensive and the best efforts of the U.N.P. produced a weak defence.

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49. C.O. 22.3.56.
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53. Sinhale 5.2.56.
54. Buddha Peramuna 28.3.56.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRESS, PRESSURE GROUPS
AND INTERESTS

I

The Press

The daily press in Ceylon has played a very important part in every election since 1946. The daily press consists of a large number of morning and evening papers in all three languages: Sinhalese, Tamil and English. They are run by two organisations, the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon and the Times Group. The former group runs the "Ceylon Daily News" (English, morning), the "Ceylon Observer" (English, evening), the "Sunday Observer" (English, morning), the "Dinamina" (Sinhalese, morning), "Silumina" (Sinhalese, Sunday morning), "Janatha" (Sinhalese, evening), and the "Thinakaran" (Tamil, morning). The Times Group runs the "Times of Ceylon" (English, evening), "Sunday Times" (English, morning) the "Lankadipa" (Sinhalese, morning) and "Sunday Lankadipa" (Sinhalese, morning).. It also ran the "Morning Times" (English, morning) for some time prior to and till after the General Election. There are no other English or Sinhalese dailies. There is one independent, a Tamil daily called the "Veerakesari". It is not therefore wrong to say that the daily press is a duopoly, even if not a monopoly.

This is also the entire national press because there are no provincial papers as in England or regional papers as in India. For an Asian country with a population of about 10 million the total press circulation is good. Prior to the General Election the Sinhalese dailies sold about 150,000 copies, English dailies about 105,000 copies and Tamil dailies about 30,000 making a total of about 285,000 copies. On Sundays the Sinhalese and English circulation was about 345,000 copies. It is not unusual for one copy of a paper to be read by more than one person and sometimes by more than one family. At least therefore there are likely to be a million readers of the daily press out of an adult population of about 6 million. This number greatly increased during the election campaign. The Table below gives an idea of the distribution of circulation of the national press.

The National Press

	<i>Daily Circulation</i>	
	<i>Prior to Election</i>	<i>During Election</i>
<i>Lake House</i>		
Ceylon Daily News ..	44,000	.. 47,000
Ceylon Observer ..	25,000	.. 23,000
Dinamina ..	67,000	.. 79,000
Janata ..	28,000	.. 40,000
Thinakaran ..	18,000	.. 18,000
Sunday Observer ..	66,000	.. 65,000
Silumina ..	143,000	.. 146,000
Thinakaran (Sunday) ..	22,000	.. 22,000

Times Group

Times of Ceylon	..	18,000	..	22,000
Morning Times	..	15,000	..	15,000
Lankadipa	..	47,000	..	78,000
Sunday Lankadipa	..	101,000	..	120,000
Sunday Times	..	35,000	..	40,000

By contrast the periodical press is weak. There are hardly any English weeklies of great political significance except the political party weeklies. Two weeklies called the "Tribune" and the "Trine" were operating during the election period. Of these the "Trine" had already been wound up but was revived during the election period. The "Tribune" was much stronger and has recently grown relatively stable. Both were left-wing papers—the "Trine" being Sinhalese-owned, and the "Tribune", Tamil-owned. A weekly called "Jana", patterned on U.S.A.'s "Time", had not much success and was subsequently wound up. There were a number of Sinhalese weeklies—"Nidahasa" (Freedom), "Sinhala Bauddhaya" (Sinhalese Buddhist) and "Rodaya" (Circle). These, apart from the last, had little political influence.

The different political parties had their own party weeklies. The U.N.P. had an English medium "U.N.P." and Sinhalese medium "Siyarata". The S.L.F.P. published "Free Lanka" and the Sinhalese "Sinhale". The L.S.S.P. had the English "Sama Samajist" and the Sinhalese "Sama Samajaya". The Communist Party had the "Forward",

the Sinhalese "Mawbima" (Motherland) and the Tamil "Desabhimani" (Motherland). The circulation of these papers is not very great and very often they do not reach beyond the hands of convinced party supporters. During the election campaign some of the Sinhalese weeklies were converted into daily sheets and it is more than likely that the circulation increased.

Apart from these, several election periodicals came out during the campaign. The "Kalyani" of Kelaniya, the "Jana Vijaya" of Negombo, the "Dumbara Vitti" of Wategama, "Rivimina" of Kotte, "Jana Balaya" of Kiriella., supported the respective U.N.P. candidates and more than likely were financed by them. "Moratu Handa" was published by one of the Independent candidates for Moratuwa. "Bauddha Lanka" and "Viduli Saraya" were inspired by the Eksath Bhikkshu Peramuna. The "Rodaya", begun in February 1955, was an anti-Catholic paper.

None of the periodical press referred to above except the "Jana", "Tribune" and "Trine" had any pretensions to independence. The others were essentially partisan either for a party or for a cause or for an individual. Only the daily press claimed directly or otherwise the prestige and prerogatives of an independent press.

Even for a general election, the total press coverage was quite satisfactory although a person who concentrated exclusively on the

English press was more than likely to get an unbalanced impression of what was happening in the country. The daily press covered the election news by reporting public meetings, party manifestoes and party manoeuvres. This was supported by the publication of letters to the editor, editorial comments and by political commentaries.

The Tables below indicate the way in which different sections of the press reported election meetings from the date of the dissolution of Parliament till the polling. The total coverage given to U.N.P. meetings is calculated at 100 and to other groups as a percentage of this.

The Daily Press - by Individual Papers							
<i>Times Group</i>	U.N.P.	M.E.P.	L.S.SP.	C.P.	F.P.	Tamil Ind.	T.C.
Lankadipa (Daily & Sunday)	100	91	17	03	—	—	—
Morning Times	100	42	23	10	26	25	1.6
Times of Ceylon (Daily & Sunday)	100	21	08	07	13	14	0.6
<i>Associated Newspapers of Ceylon</i>							
Dinamina & Silumina	100	33	09	02	1.5	1.4	—
Janata	100	45	12	01	0.4	02	—
Ceylon Daily News	100	29	12	08	07	09	1.5
Ceylon Observer	100	18	11	11	09	10	—
Thinakaran	100	57	21	17	66	10	20

These tables show only the proportions. In terms of actual amount of coverage given to all election meetings, the "Dinamina" and "Silumina" headed the list, followed by "Lankadipa", "Janata", "Morning Times", "Ceylon Daily News", "Times of Ceylon" and the "Ceylon Observer". As a whole the Sinhalese Press covered Tamil election meetings rather poorly. Among the English daily press the Times group gave more coverage to Tamil election news than the Associated Newspapers.

The majority of the daily papers were sympathetic to the U.N.P., one Sinhalese daily being sympathetic to the M.E.P. There was none which espoused the cause of the Marxist groups, the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. This sympathy was expressed not merely in the coverage given, but also in the manner of the coverage. It will be seen later that although the S.L.F.P., L.S.S.P. and C.P. had no-contest agreements there was a certain amount of mutual recrimination. These papers which were sympathetic to the U.N.P. made much of these intra-opposition squabbles, though it must be added that this practice was less in 1956 than in 1952.

The party sympathy was also evident in the inspired comments on party manoeuvres in editorials, in political commentaries and in the publication of letters to the editor. Here are some extracts from the editorial comments of one English daily; "The U.N.P. has to take the language issue out of the

hands of the demagogues and racial propagandists on both sides of the front. Frustrated politicians whom power has eluded may naturally be ready to employ any means to gain office.”¹ “....Any party which is in alliance with groups which have a vested interest in chaos is in danger of becoming an instrument of these groups and if placed in office cannot be relied upon for a stable government.”² However this paper’s editorials in a majority of issues were non-political.

In a majority of papers the editorials were used in a generally unbiassed or non-political manner. The political commentaries were however openly used for expressing sympathy with a party or group. Letters to the editor were similarly used. The choice of headlines, the place given to different items and even “kite-flying” were used in a manner which was somewhat partisan. On the whole, however, taking the entire press into consideration the Opposition parties received fair coverage in the general election of 1956.

It was generally held, however, that one of the two press combines was strongly in favour of the U.N.P. The M.E.P. and those groups which supported the M.E.P. therefore began a powerful campaign against that press. An attack on the Lake House press written by Mr. L. H. Mettananda and published for the E.B.P. was distributed in practically every Sinhalese-speaking constituency. The arguments used in this attack

were as follows: Although the majority of newspaper readers are Buddhists, all the daily papers are in the hands of Christians. Since the Times group was founded and even now owned by Christians one cannot hope for their assistance in times of danger to Buddhists. The Lake House press causes the greatest concern to Buddhists. It has been converted into an anti-Buddhist front. Its key-men are all Christians. It publishes pictures of half-nude women and indecent details of court cases. It even went so far as to have a beautiful legs competition. It publishes material likely to excite the sensual. It removes the fear of crime from people’s minds by publishing details of murder, rape, etc. Its Christian cartoonists ridicule the ancient Buddhist kings, Buddhist leaders and patriots. There have never been cartoons directed against Christians or Christian institutions. It pretends to support Buddhism by publishing Wesak Annuals etc. But any attempt to bring together Buddhists or bhikkus is sought to be destroyed. When bhikkus rise up against injustice they are called political bhikkus. So it is time to organise a Lake House boycott campaign. At sermons and at meetings the Lake House press must be shown in its true colours as the agent of Mara (Satan).³

This campaign was supported by the Buddhist periodical “Buddha Peramuna.”⁴ And the Buddhist Commission report itself had argued that “it is no secret that the

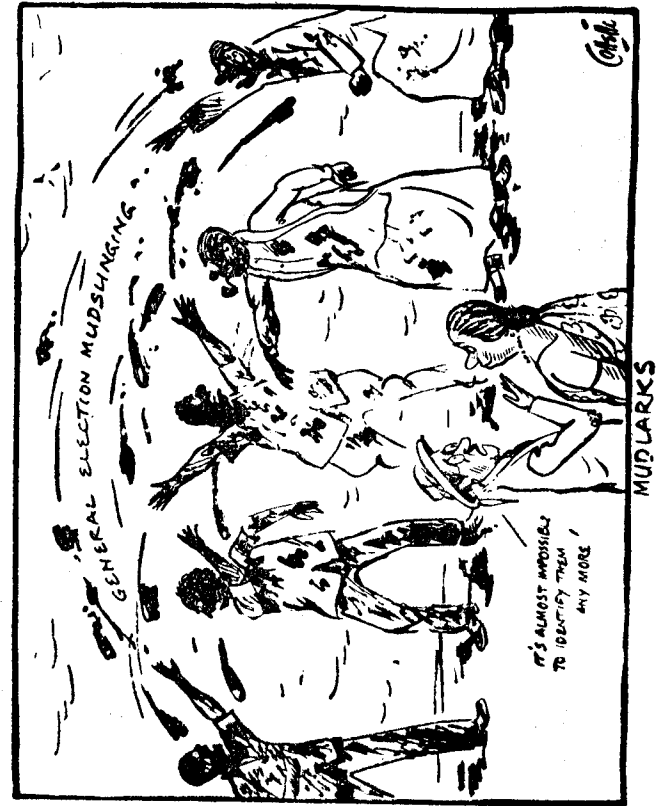
daily press is carrying on a secret campaign against Buddhism and Buddhist civilization.⁵

The different papers created different images of the general election campaign. The English papers of the Times group suggested the image of a strong party, the U.N.P., being nibbled at by a host of small-scale opponents—the Opposition groups. Some of the Lake House papers created the image of a stable righteous party being challenged by an unprincipled combination of political opportunists. The “Lankadipa” saw the election as a choice of a Prime Minister. The “Ceylon Observer” created Citizen Perera, mildly cynical and slightly bewildered by all this pother.

II

The Christian Church.

In the general election of 1952 the Christian Churches, especially the Catholic Church, took a leading part in supporting the U.N.P. This was the subject of considerable discussion both within and outside the Church.⁶ In the 1956 election the Christian Churches took care not to be associated openly with any party. The aggressive electioneering of the E.B.P. far from tempting them to be equally aggressive made them even more cautious. This was indeed a very wise decision especially because the Buddhist Commission report had created considerable alarm among the Buddhists over Catholic activities in Ceylon.



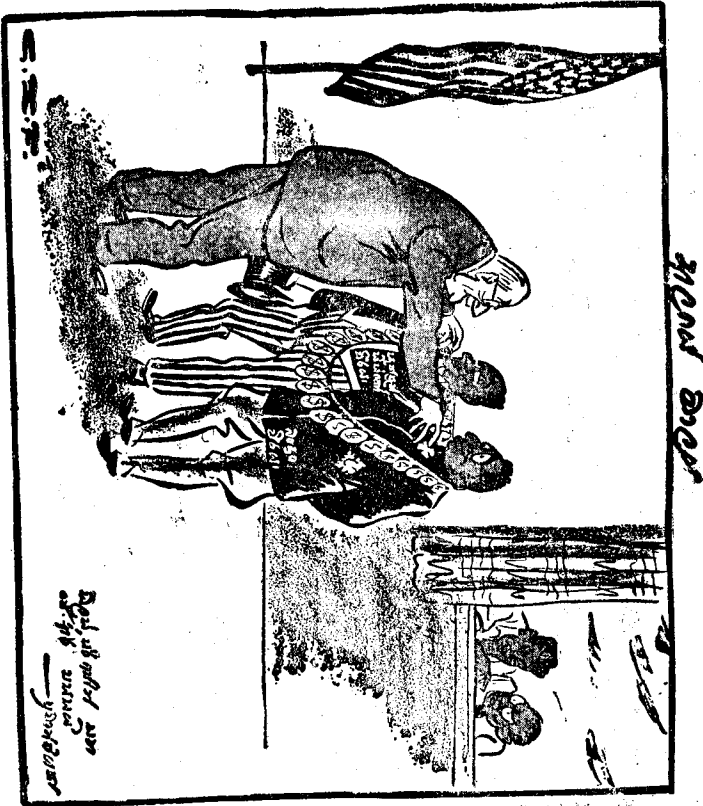
MUDLARKS

CEYLON OBSERVER 29. 3. 56.

The effect of the 1952 electioneering by the Catholic Church was to associate the latter with the U.N.P. in the public mind. In March 1956 an election story was circulating to the effect that the Catholic Church had contributed one million rupees to the U.N.P. election fund. It was suggested that this was given as a bribe to the U.N.P. to hold the elections prior to the Buddha Jayanti with the intention of disrupting the latter.⁷ The Archbishop of Colombo categorically contradicted this statement.⁸

A section of the press also attempted to revive the theory that the Catholic Church instructed Catholics not to vote for any Marxist party or a party associated with Marxists. This latter phrase would have included the M.E.P. as well leaving only the U.N.P. and some Independents out of it. This was indeed the interpretation given in 1952 to the Archbishop's Pastoral letter. In 1956 a more liberal interpretation was sought to be given. The Church contradicted the slant given by the press. Pamphlets were distributed in Catholic constituencies publicising this contradiction. The pastoral letter of 1952 had stated that "No Catholic with even an atom of Christian conscience can vote for a candidate who belongs to a political creed banned by the Church - let it be Communism or any other - or has pledged himself directly or indirectly to an electoral programme inimical to God and to the Church or who is in sympathy with those who are hostile to the Church".⁹

LANKADIPA 13.3.56.



In the 1956 election the Church defined its position vis-a-vis politics cautiously. It stated that as citizens, Catholics should obtain their due and rightful place in the affairs of the country. The Church however was not a political body. Therefore Catholics should do nothing to give occasion for the view that the Church was a political agent. If the pulpit were used for political speeches in the present context, the Church would be so regarded.

The pulpit might be used to advise the Catholics to obtain their rights. But it should not be used for political work. The Catholic clergy should not participate in political meetings. Property, schools, etc., belonging to the Catholic Church should not be used for political purposes.

Even so Christianity could not be entirely kept out of the campaign. Many pamphlets were distributed in Catholic constituencies urging Catholics to vote U.N.P. on the ground that the M.E.P. was anti-Catholic. In Kegalle, a Buddhist majority constituency where a Catholic was contesting on the U.N.P. ticket, Sir John alleged that the M.E.P. candidate was raising the religious cry.¹⁰ "Tribune" alleged that the American Mission in Jaffna was openly canvassing for Federalist candidates.¹¹ The U.N.P. criticised the M.E.P. for putting forward a Christian to contest the Buddhist candidate at Wattegama - the man who had done so much for the Buddha Jayanti.

Anti-Christian criticisms by the Buddhists had been primarily levelled at the Catholic Church. The Protestant Churches too had been criticised but much more mildly. The Protestant Churches organised in the National Christian Council were equally moderate. "It is probably true to say," an N.C.C. bulletin said, "that many of our fellow countrymen sincerely feel that Christians were given a privileged position under the colonial regime."¹² Christians should read the Buddhist Commission report and "understand the depth of feeling" to which the report gives expression.¹³ Some of its recommendations must be resisted in the name of religious liberty which would involve the Church in a forbearance towards Buddhist demands which "it has not always been ready to show."¹⁴ However, "there is something a little comic and very sad in the spectacle of the Church declaiming against the Education Ordinance because it deprives the Buddhist parent of the right to have his children taught Christianity if he so desires....and in the same breath resisting the proposal that any provision should be made for the Buddhist parent who wishes his children to be taught Buddhism.....We need to ask ourselves whether the Church can demand the right to educate non-Christian children whether the nation wishes it or not.....We must beware of simply fighting for our vested interests whether those vested interests are of monetary value or of prestige value."¹⁵ On the

other hand the Protestant Church was aware of the cultural force of the Buddhist revival. "The tendency to regard national culture as synonymous with the religious practices of the majority community is one that must be strictly resisted by the state."¹⁶

The Christian Churches, however, did not surrender before the Buddhist campaign. They sought to be moderate in their demands and to re-consider their previous positions. They acted in a statesman-like manner in seeking to fight for issue or policies rather than for a particular party. And in this the Protestant Church gave the lead.

Caste.

III.

There is no evidence to suggest that caste was a sufficient consideration in the election of a candidate in any constituency. There is also no evidence to deny that it was one of the multitude of factors which may have weighed in a voter's mind. Even so there is much to suggest that generally speaking the candidates and the political parties regarded it as an important factor to which concessions had to be made.

One Independent candidate came forward for Ambalangoda-Balapitiya almost entirely on the caste issue. A pamphlet in support of this candidate stated that there were at least 13,000 voters of his caste in the constituency. Being a two-member constituency there were 26,000 votes of that caste. The pamphlet urged the caste-group to return a son of the caste to Parliament.¹⁷

A certain minority caste was in a majority in the Balangoda two-member constituency and was a sizeable minority in many of the constituencies of Central province and Sabaragamuwa. A Minister of the U.N.P. Government who belonged to this caste sent a personal letter (as a pamphlet) to these constituencies urging the people to vote for U.N.P. candidates on the ground that the U.N.P. had eschewed caste considerations and treated this minority caste in the most democratic manner in its whole history. "The U.N.P.," he wrote, "is the only party which treats all castes alike." The U.N.P., he argued, had opened the door to anyone to reach even the high office of Governor General irrespective of caste. And it had served all constituencies alike without consideration of caste.¹⁸

These two instances were about the only open use of the caste issue. In the Northern province the problem was more complicated and will be discussed subsequently. Even in the rest of the country there is evidence that some use was made of the caste issue by different candidates. In Kegalle it was suggested that the sitting U.N.P. member was shifted to Mawanella as an act of discrimination against his minority caste.¹⁹ The Eksath Bhikkshu Peramuna branch at Alawwa wrote a pamphlet suggesting that the U.N.P. was using the caste issue at Mawanella.²⁰ Sir John criticised certain campaigners at Dehiowita for raising the caste issue against the U.N.P. candidate.²¹ He also alleged

that the M.E.P. and L.S.S.P. candidates at Wellawatte-Galkissa were seeking to play on their castes to win votes.²² In Ja-Ela, Mr. Stanley Soysa distributed a pamphlet criticising those who were trying to raise the caste issue against him.²³ It was alleged that the Communist Party candidate for Matara was chosen on caste grounds.²⁴

It is obvious that the major parties were loath to use the caste issue openly. They seemed to appreciate and accept the general sense of the people that rousing caste-feeling for electioneering was something unprincipled. Allegations of using the caste issue were made against parties and candidates as arguments against them. The fact that public opinion had reached such a level on caste was itself something noteworthy. Thus in Mawanella the S.L.F.P. candidate used the following words in a poster :-

*Kula Bedaya Nethi Karanna
Rata Agama Bera Ganna
Obe Vatina Chande Menna
Beligammana Athata Denna.*

*" Your valuable vote you must cast
To Beligammana and his Hand
To destroy the divisions into caste
To protect our religion and our land. "*
(translation)

Except in a few constituencies the caste of an applicant was not an insuperable barrier to obtaining party nomination.

It is likely, however, that in private canvassing in certain constituencies candidates used their caste claims with their caste groups. This was done in confidence for fear of public criticism. Even so since all parties preferred local candidates wherever possible, that the chosen candidate's caste often coincided with that of the majority of voters was more a matter of coincidence. The more important point is that in certain constituencies the major parties nominated candidates of a caste different from that of the majority of voters. Caste therefore was very often a very marginal factor and it was so used. If the trend that was noticed in the 1956 election continues it is more than likely that caste will become even less important in the future and perhaps will cease to be a factor which should be examined as a pressure or interest group.

IV

Minor Groups

An important but minor group from the point of view of numbers as well as political pressure was that of Ayurvedic physicians. There are perhaps less than 4,000 Ayurvedic physicians in the country (apart from the Northern and Eastern provinces). They were organised in the All-Ceylon Ayurvedic Congress with a fair number of regional branches. They were, by and large, strong supporters of the swabasha movement and the Buddhist revival. They were strong defenders of Ayurveda as well.

The Government of the day was torn between its political loyalty to Ayurveda and its scientific loyalty to western medicine. It was held by some that the Ayurvedic system should benefit from certain developments in western medical science. These persons urged the adaptation of some western medical arts as a means of improving the Ayurvedic system. The Government published a White Paper which showed sympathy with these suggestions. To the purists this appeared as the thin end of the wedge. Thus at a meeting of Ayurvedic doctors held on 16.1.56 the White Paper was described as an attempt to destroy Ayurveda.²⁵ A deputation of Ayurvedic physicians who met Sir John pressed him not to allow the mixing of the Ayurvedic and the western systems.²⁶ An Ayurvedic Congress meeting held in February 1956 at Kurunegala alleged that the Minister of Health was not taking any steps to amend the White Paper.²⁷ A meeting of the Siddhayurveda practitioners held on the 21st of February claimed that while the White Paper benefitted 400 it would destroy 12,000 Ayurvedic practitioners and the whole system which was 2000 years old.²⁸

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party had from the beginning sought to espouse the cause of Ayurveda. The "Free Lanka" of 27.11.55 had pointed out that the Government was spending Rs. 80,000,000 annually on western medicine and only about Rs. 1,000,000 on Ayurveda.²⁹ It is not surprising therefore that a majority of Ayurvedic practitioners were

supporters of the S.L.F.P. and some branches openly declared their support of the M.E.P.³⁰ The Ayurvedic physicians were therefore an important element of support of the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna.

Another important group was the Association of the S.S.C. (swabasha) qualified unemployed. It claimed a membership of over 60,000 and a voting strength of 20,000. They were often supporters of Sinhala Only and the Buddhist revival. A number of the S.S.C. qualified were, of course, supporters of the L.S.S.P. and C.P. and were even members of their youth leagues. Generally speaking they were pro-M.E.P. and strongly opposed to the U.N.P. It was partly an economic pressure-group, being an association basically of the S.S.C. qualified unemployed. Swabasha educated, aiming at the kind of jobs held by English S.S.C. qualified, they were as a group as yet unattracted by the class-slogans of the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. They saw their future prospects in a policy of administration in swabasha (meaning Sinhalese) rather than in a government of workers and peasants. They were in effect a potential swabasha educated lower middle-class. Thus they decided to support the M.E.P. candidate at Matara who left the Communist Party on the language issue.³¹

V

The Bhikkus

The most effective and powerful pressure-group in the general election was the Buddhist clergy. The Buddhist clergy were

divided into two broad groups—the pro-M.E.P. and the pro-U.N.P. The first group, broadly speaking, came together in an organisation called the Eksath Bhikkshu Peramuna (E.B.P.). As early as 1953 Sangha Sabhas (Bhikku Associations) were being organised in different parts of the country. A number of them came to be associated in a body called the Sri Lanka Maha Sangha Sabha. Subsequently another association called the All-Ceylon Congress of Bhikku Societies was formed with Rev. Mapitigama Buddhakkita Thero and Rev. Talpawila Seelawansa Thero as joint secretaries. It is out of the union of these two bodies that the Eksath Bhikkshu Peramuna was born.³² This was indeed a powerful association with over 75 regional bodies.³³ In numbers the E.B.P. claimed a membership of about 12,000 clergy.³⁴

The Buddhist clergy had been from the beginning some of the strongest protagonists of swabasha and then subsequently of Sinhala Only. Needless to say they also spear-headed the Buddhist revival. So far they had been supporting issues. With the formation of the E.B.P. they moved from issues to parties and decided to destroy the U.N.P. government.

The first phase of this campaign began as a movement against the Government's decision to hold the general election in early 1956. The Buddha Jayanti celebrations were to begin in May 1956. The campaign was directed on the slogan "No election before the Buddha Jayanti". This was of course

made possible by the fact that the Parliament was not due to be dissolved till May 1957. The campaign began in January 1956. In February it was decided to perform satyagraha if the general election were not postponed.³⁵ The programme was announced at a series of public meetings. A meeting of representatives from 75 Sangha Sabhas was held in Colombo. A general election was described as Mara (Satan) from whom Buddhism had to be protected. When the U.N.P. went ahead with the dissolution of Parliament, the bhikkus carried out the satyagraha in many towns and centres throughout the country.³⁶ About 250 bhikkus fasted in Colombo. They marched from the steps of the House of Representatives to Victoria Park.

The second phase consisted of open campaigning for the M.E.P. and against the U.N.P. The E.B.P. held meetings of its own criticising the Government. Each meeting was treated as a platform to place before the people the Great Petition of the Maha Sangha. ^a E.B.P. clergy were prominent speakers at M.E.P. meetings. Each branch association decided to support the anti-U.N.P. candidate (usually M.E.P.) in the constituency of the area. Thus the Sangha Sabha at Bingiriya decided to support Mr. T. B. Subasinghe at Bingiriya;³⁷ the Raigam Korale branch decided to support Mr. Sagara Palansuriya, the V.L.S.S.P. - M.E.P. candidate for Horana.³⁸ Each Sangha Sabha decided to divide itself

^a Maha Sanghayaage Peminilla. Maha Sangha is the term used to describe the Buddhist Clergy collectively.

into small groups to go canvassing and to hold public meetings.³⁹ Some of them published pamphlets presenting arguments as to why the U.N.P. should be defeated.⁴⁰

While the branch associations took charge of their local constituencies, the E.B.P. set about the nation-wide campaign. On March 3rd it held a meeting in support of what was called the Dasa Panatha—or the Ten Basic Principles. At that meeting the following 10 principles were placed before the country :-

1. To follow the principle of non-violence in every line of action.
2. To look upon every injustice in any form as if it were Satan himself.
3. To implement the proposals of the Buddhist Commission Report.
4. To take all steps to make Sinhala the only Official Language.
5. To prepare a programme of action to protect democracy, to inhibit fascism and communism and to remove the anti-democratic acts and institutions of the U.N.P. Government.
6. To promote the national arts & crafts, Ayurveda etc., which are part of the national heritage and to follow the principle of simple living.
7. To give complete freedom of religion, to treat all alike without consideration of religion but at the same time to place Buddhism in a position due to it as the religion of the majority.

8. To manage public affairs in a manner that will give an opportunity of felicitous living to all.
9. To bring about a fairer distribution of wealth among all classes of people.
10. To refuse government assistance to all institutions which promote communal disharmony or which destroy the peace and equality among peoples.

The national campaign of the E.B.P. was directed along three lines. Firstly, it consisted in popularising and embellishing the arguments of the Buddhist Commission Report, especially where it was anti-Catholic. It argued that the Government had set Catholicism upon the throne of Ceylon. While the Prime Minister inveighed against colonialism anywhere anytime the Buddhists of free Ceylon were still in the chains of colonialism. Christian Churches had a right to unlimited acquisition of property. There was no means of examining or taxing their incomes. The Government was encouraging the entry of Buddhist children to Christian schools by giving the latter grants in respect of the former. Government grants to Christian schools amounted to Rs. 45 million annually while only Rs. 300,000 was given to Pirivenas. Under the U.N.P. regime Christian collegiate schools numbered 205 while Buddhists had only 55. In University managing bodies Christians were 3 times the number of Buddhists. Buddhist books were removed from schools and Christian orientated

books were substituted in their place. The Roman Catholic Church was an Empire masquerading under the name of religion.⁴¹

If Church property were taxed the Government could have had an annual revenue of Rs. 130 million—enough to sell rice at the cheaper price. But because of its loyalty to Christianity the Kotelawala Government preferred to give a mortal blow to the people rather than tax the Church. The Government gave the highest offices to Christians. It was opposed to making the traditional Buddhist holidays into public holidays. It was opposed to the national dress. It was opposed to everything national.⁴² It had permitted the Catholic Church to insult Buddhism in the most disrespectful terms. Thus a Catholic paper called "Seraya" was alleged to have written that when the great Buddhist nun, Sangamitta, came to Ceylon her 5,000 nuns gave birth to children fathered by Ceylonese men.⁴³

The second line was directly anti-U.N.P. E.B.P. organs argued that the chief men of the U.N.P. had been brought up in Christian schools, and were ignorant of Ceylon's history and of Buddhism. They pretended to be Buddhists for political reasons. They were immersed in Christian culture and civilization.⁴⁴ The E.B.P. argued that the most powerful political body in Ceylon today was the Catholic Church. The U.N.P. was merely one of the back-wheels of this Catholic steam-roller.

Sir John, they argued, was born to a Christian family and brought up in a Christian atmosphere. He destroyed the honour of this country by bringing into Ceylon half-nude foreign women. He was responsible for ordering the inhuman methods in the anti-opium campaign.

The third line was to associate the U.N.P. with the Americans. The U.N.P., the E.B.P. argued, had sold the country to the Americans. The price was Rs. 25,000,000 in loans and 15,000,000 lbs. of flour.⁴⁵ The U.S.A. hoped to make Ceylon a secret member of SEATO. It was helping the U.N.P. to win the election with that intention. The black-Americans of Ceylon were conducting negotiations on these lines.⁴⁶ But wherever Americans got control as in S. Korea and Vietnam, they established Christian dictatorships. The chief promoters of this movement, Dulles and Bishop Lucas, arrived in Ceylon with these intentions and the U.N.P. would sacrifice Ceylon on the altar of Christian Americans.⁴⁷

The U.N.P. was thoroughly alarmed by this campaign. It therefore organised a counter-campaign with the help of bhikkus favourable to itself. As a general rule the chief-priests of the leading temples were in favour of the U.N.P. The heads of the two great centres, Malwatte and Asgiriya in Kandy, were persuaded by the Prime Minister to write against the politically active bhikkus. The Principals of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas were also persuaded to issue a similar statement.

In both cases the signatories declared their opposition to the partisan campaign of the E.B.P. and asked the Buddhist public to express their disapproval also. On the 24th of March 1956, a meeting of the Buddhist clergy was held under the chairmanship of Rev. Welivitiye Sorata, Principal of Vidya-daya Pirivena. The meeting argued that it was wrong to say that the Government had done nothing for Buddhism. It justified the Government's cautious swabasha policy. It claimed that the damage of 400 years of colonial rule could not be repaired in 10 years.⁴⁸ A number of individual bhikkus also campaigned for the U.N.P. as in Bingiriya.⁴⁹

The counter-campaign lacked the force and determination of the E.B.P. The criticism levelled at the E.B.P. by a certain section of the daily press incensed them even more. Some unfortunate epithets used by Sir John to describe the E.B.P. clergy made it difficult for them to forgive him. So that the bhikkus in the E.B.P. remained the most powerful engine of M.E.P. support.

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CHAPTER VII
THE CAMPAIGN

I.

Opposition Unity.

It was noticed earlier how the formation of the M.E.P., the no-contest agreements between the S.L.F.P. and the L.S.S.P. and C.P. and the understanding between the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. brought about a great measure of electoral unity in the Opposition. Apart from the constituencies in the Northern and Eastern provinces there were 75 constituencies in the rest of the country returning 79 members. With regard to these there were only 11 clashes among the Opposition distributed as follows: four in the Western province; two in the Southern; two in the Central; one in the North-Western; one in the North-Central and one in Sabaragamuwa. There were therefore 68 straight fights as between the Government and the Opposition. In contrast with the situation in 1952 this was indeed a substantial degree of Opposition electoral unity. One of the important features of the election campaign was that Opposition unity was not confined to electoral pacts only. Except in a few constituencies the Opposition groups helped each other. This took a variety of forms. Opposition leaders spoke in support of other Opposition candidates. Anti-U.N.P. pamphlets originating from one

Opposition group came to be distributed in constituencies where another Opposition group candidate was contesting. Youth leagues belonging to different Opposition groups supported a common Opposition candidate. The Opposition shared party offices for the campaign. Mr. Bandaranaike as the leader of the M.E.P. took the lead in these matters and the E.B.P. followed his lead. Wherever an M.E.P. candidate and an L.S.S.P. candidate were contesting the U.N.P. Mr. Banadaranaiké asked his supporters to vote M.E.P. and if they did not wish to do so, to vote for the L.S.S.P. That was the burden of Mr. Bandaranaike's address at Wellawatte-Galkissa on the 23rd of March.¹ That again was the trend of his speech at Kalutara on the 28th.² Where there was no M.E.P. candidate he openly and directly asked his supporters to vote for the Opposition candidate. Pamphlets under the signature of the M.E.P. campaign manager were distributed in such constituencies contested by the L.S.S.P. Thus at Agalawatta the M.E.P. supported Mr. Anil Moonasinghe of the L.S.S.P. as the only Opposition candidate.

The E.B.P. supported all the M.E.P. candidates and in a very few cases Independents. Where none of these clashed with the L.S.S.P., the L.S.S.P. candidates were supported by them. The Pas Yodun Rata Sangha Sabha decided to do everything in their power to help the only anti-U.N.P.

candidate (L.S.S.P.) at Agalawatta.³ The "Buddha Lanka"—a paper inspired by the E.B.P.—supported L.S.S.P. candidates when there was no clash with the M.E.P., e.g. at Dehiowita.⁴

Where the L.S.S.P. did not clash with other Opposition groups it supported the other Opposition candidate. The L.S.S.P. youth leagues in the Kandy area distributed pamphlets in support of the M.E.P. candidates in Kandy, Galaha and Kadugannawa.⁵ It offered the use of L.S.S.P. offices to certain S.L.F.P. and C.P. candidates.⁶ Dr. N. M. Perera spoke in support of M.E.P. candidates in several constituencies as at Dodangaslanda.⁷ Where however there were both an M.E.P. and C.P. candidate, the L.S.S.P. support was given to the C.P. as at Matara.⁸

The Communist Party also gave its direct support to other Opposition candidates. Dr. S. A. Wickramasinghe, the C.P. leader, declared in March that all left parties should support the M.E.P. to defeat the U.N.P.⁹ The C.P. decided to support S.L.F.P. candidates in certain seats such as Deniyaya, Weligama, Hambantota and Anuradhapura.¹⁰ Where there was a clash between the C.P. and the M.E.P. the C.P. asked support for the M.E.P. if the people did not wish to support the C.P. e.g. at Kurunegala.¹¹ Where there was a clash between the L.S.S.P. and the M.E.P. the C.P. campaigned for the L.S.S.P. as at Kalutara.¹²

This was the general pattern. There were several exceptions and these occurred when the Opposition groups clashed in a seat which one of them thought belonged to its own sphere of influence. Thus Dr. Colvin R. de Silva criticised the M.E.P. candidate for Kalutara.¹³ Dr. N. M. Perera criticised Mr. R. E. Jayatileke's candidature for Nawalapitiya. The L.S.S.P. severely attacked the C.P. for supporting the left-wing Independent at Colombo North as against the L.S.S.P. nominee.¹⁴ At Maskeliya the M.E.P. candidate censured the L.S.S.P.¹⁵ And of course nothing could assuage the bitter feelings between the V.L.S.S.P. and the L.S.S.P.

II

The Choice of a Prime Minister

Although the election campaign officially began after the dissolution of Parliament, it is not wrong to place its unofficial beginnings as early as January 1958. The U.N.P. campaign really began once the Prime Minister had decided on an early dissolution. Its emphasis however was more on setting its house in order than on direct campaigning. Its efforts at dramatising the Sinhala Only policy have already been mentioned. It had to accept and accommodate Mr. Dudley Senanayake's resignation. It had to reach some decision on the rivalry between Mr. J. R. Jayawardene and Mr. R. G. Senanayake. By mid-January the U.N.P. decision to accept Sinhala Only was well known. The Sinhala Only movement.

in the country saw in this an election tactic. The Opposition groups which supported Sinhala Only pressed the U.N.P. to put that policy into law before dissolving Parliament. The S.L.F.P. offered its parliamentary assistance for such legislation, a demand which put the U.N.P. somewhat on the defensive but the party sought to parry it by expounding the democratic principle of seeking a mandate before a vital change of policy was implemented. For a time therefore the unofficial campaign was a fight between Sinhala Only after dissolution vs. Sinhala Only at once.

As yet the general opinion in the country was that a general election would bring victory to the U.N.P. Since the Buddhist clergy organised in the E.B.P. were determined to defeat the U.N.P. they started a movement protesting against an early dissolution. "Sinhala Only Now" was backed by "No-Dissolution before Buddha Jayanti".

While these issues were being faced by the Government, the methods and means adopted in the opium eradication scheme in the South raised a storm of protest. The Opposition squeezed every ounce of advantage from this episode and embarrassed the Government in no small measure.

The unofficial campaign came to an end with the dissolution of Parliament and the U.N.P. went to the country in earnest and with a fair measure of optimism. The campaign centred round the major issues

already analysed. The major interests and pressure-groups swung into action. The U.N.P. asked the people to return it with a sufficient majority to amend the Constitution to make Sinhala the only official language. The Prime Minister asked for 65 seats. The optimists did not think the demand excessive. Soon the Opposition began to ridicule the demand for 65 seats as impossible of achievement since the U.N.P. was contesting only 76 seats. It suggested that this was another election trick to deny Sinhala Only by putting the blame on the electorate for not returning 65 U.N.P. members. The charge seems to have hit its target because by the beginning of March the Prime Minister asked for only 51 seats.¹⁶ Sir John declared that if the U.N.P. won 51 seats, he would see that the Sinhala Only policy was accepted by Parliament. On 9th March Sir John revived his demand for 65 seats. Apparently his optimism had been slightly dampened by that time. He is reported to have told his Cabinet Ministers that the U.N.P. was likely to win 60 seats including two Independents who were likely to join the U.N.P. after election. With the 6 nominated members he expected a majority of 66. Soon afterwards he made the public statement that even if he won only 10 seats he would still be Prime Minister.¹⁷ This statement presented the Opposition with a powerful weapon against the Government. Sir John was charged with planning a fascist coup. He was alleged to be admitting his party's future defeat. Sir John's alleged

fascist inclination was coupled with Mr. Foster Dulles' visit to Ceylon and it was argued that America was behind the movement promoting a fascist regime in Ceylon.

From the dissolution of Parliament till nomination day the campaign was a fight between the U.N.P. and its opponents. The opponents raised arguments to show why the U.N.P. was unfit to govern. From nomination day onwards there appeared an alternative to the U.N.P.—the M.E.P. Even before the country awoke to this realisation pro-U.N.P. journals posed the general election as a fight between the U.N.P. and the M.E.P.¹⁸ The political correspondent of the "Ceylon Daily News" saw the election as a battle between Sir John and Mr. Bandaranaike.¹⁹ The Prime Minister directed his campaign against a "Government of Mr. Bandaranaike". If Mr. Bandaranaike obtained power, Sir John declared on the 10th of March, it would end in bloodshed brought about by religious and communal discord.²⁰ The M.E.P. also reacted accordingly. On the 12th of March Mr. Bandaranaike declared that the problem before the people was to choose what kind of government they desired.²¹ So from about the 10th of March the U.N.P. assumed that Mr. Bandaranaike was the rival for the premiership and many U.N.P. speeches were directed against him. By the middle of March the M.E.P. went on to the offensive. It claimed that Mr. Bandaranaike would form the next government. Mr. Bandaranaike's speeches came to be punctuated by what he would do if he came to

power.²² By the 20th of March, the issue was squarely placed before the Sinhalese reading public as the choice of a Prime Minister—Sir John or Mr. Bandaranaike. On the 20th Mr. Bandaranaike claimed that the evidence available proved that he could form the next Government. The U.N.P. obliquely conceded the possibility of such a turn of events when Mr. M. D. Banda, a Minister of the U.N.P., said, "Even if the M.E.P. comes to power it cannot govern". The public received the idea of a general election as the choice of a Prime Minister. When on the 22nd of March, during his election tour, Mr. Bandaranaike arrived at Avissawella, his audience greeted him as "our future Prime Minister."²³ On the same day Sir John declared that he had to face an opponent worse than a Sama Samajist—Mr. Bandaranaike. A few days later Sir John challenged Mr. Bandaranaike to name his likely Cabinet should he become Prime Minister. And from then onwards Sir John campaigned against the "danger" of an M.E.P. victory.

From about the middle of March, even the L.S.S.P. had accepted the likelihood of a Government led by the M.E.P. Their party paper declared on the 15th of March that "even if the U.N.P. were defeated by some means or other in this election, it will not be possible to form a Sama Samaja Government. The M.E.P. will however form a Government which will be beneficial to the common man. Since the L.S.S.P. does not completely agree with all the policies

of the S.L.F.P. which is the chief element in the M.E.P. it is necessary to return at least 10-12 L.S.S.P. members to Parliament."

Within a few days of this statement the L.S.S.P. expressed its willingness to help Mr. Bandaranaike to form a Government. By the 22nd of March both the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. had made their offer of help to Mr. Bandaranaike to form a Government. Even at this date the L.S.S.P. did not think that the M.E.P. would win an absolute majority in Parliament—in fact hardly any one did. "The one man who will benefit from this election is Mr. Bandaranaike," said Dr. N. M. Perera, "but he will not be able to form a Government and maintain it unless we help him. With the S.L.F.P. the L.S.S.P. will form a real democratic government. It is only the L.S.S.P. that can control Mr. Bandaranaike. That is why the L.S.S.P. did not join him at once."²⁴

The M.E.P. was forging ahead on its own by the middle of March. The offer of C.P. and L.S.S.P. help made the election a clear issue between Sir John and Mr. Bandaranaike. This change was reflected in the reaction of Independent candidates. Some of them withdrew in favour of the M.E.P. Some others who remained in the fight offered to support Mr. Bandaranaike if elected to Parliament. It was also reflected in the constituency campaign. Thus at Panadura the slogan was "Vote for Mr. Leslie Gunawardena (L.S.S.P.) to enable Mr. Bandaranaike to form a Government".²⁵

III

In the Constituencies.

In one sense the national campaign was the sum total of the campaign in the constituencies. In another sense it was different because the arguments and issues raised at the national level were seasoned and spiced with a local flavour in practically every constituency. Where the L.S.S.P. was in the field pamphlets were distributed suggesting that its leaders were capitalists falsely shouting for socialism. It was alleged that they owned many shares in foreign-owned and local-owned companies. One L.S.S.P. leader was alleged to be holding his property in the names of his wife and children either because he suspected that capitalism in Ceylon would survive him or if Ceylon were under an L.S.S.P. Government and individual income were limited to Rs. 2,000/- a month his larger income could be maintained under different names. Another L.S.S.P. leader was charged with increasing his income by speculation.²⁶ In Ruawella where the L.S.S.P. leader was contesting much was made of his inclination towards western culture-patterns. A picture of Dr. N. M. Perera in a ball-room dance was circulated as a U.N.P. pamphlet.²⁷ In Horana where an ex-bhikku was contesting on the V.L.S.S.P.-M.E.P. ticket, the U.N.P. sought to capitalise on the general disapproval of persons who give up the priestly robes. The M.E.P. candidate on the other

hand quoted history to show that some of the noblest kings of ancient Ceylon had at one stage entered the Sasana (priesthood) and then withdrawn.²⁸ In Galle and Dandagamuwa, the Opposition candidates were condemned for moving from group to group without any consistent policy.²⁹ In Kandy the Opposition claimed that the election law was amended to satisfy the specific needs of one person who was then contesting Kandy as the U.N.P. nominee.³⁰ In Wellawatta-Galkissa the U.N.P. sought to defend itself against the high academic attainments of the L.S.S.P. candidate *vis-a-vis* its own nominee by arguing that it was not the knowledge crammed from books that makes a man a good M.P., but that it was practical knowledge and common sense.³¹ In Wattegama where the M.E.P. candidate was a Christian, the U.N.P. emphasised its great services to Buddhism.³² In Kegalle where the U.N.P. candidate was a Christian he produced evidence of his contributions to Buddhist improvements.³³

In some cases the local flavour went beyond the confines of a constituency and embraced a whole region. In the Christian majority constituencies of Chilaw, Ja-ela, Negombo and Nattandiya, the M.E.P. was anxious to prove that it was a secular party determined to protect the freedom of religion.³⁴ It was anxious to prove that by the alliance between the S.L.F.P. and the V.L.S.S.P. the latter was brought to accept the S.L.F.P.'s stand on religion.³⁵ In the

rice-surplus areas, the U.N.P. sought to argue that by removing the subsidy on rice, the Government was able to buy paddy at a guaranteed price well above the market price.³⁶ In the tea-producing areas the price of green-leaf was raised as an issue. The M.E.P. argued that Sir John's unguarded statement in London caused the drop in the price of leaf causing much hardship to the small-holder.³⁷ The U.N.P. tried to capitalise on the anti-Indian feeling by suggesting that when Mr. Bandaranaike was Minister of Local Administration (1936-47), he sought to give voting rights in local elections to all Indians in up-country areas.³⁸

It will be remembered that all the major political parties sought to nominate local persons wherever this was possible. Wherever one candidate was a local man, and the other was not, the former sought to win popularity by emphasising his local connections and capitalising on the general prejudice against "the man from outside". Thus the U.N.P., for example, raised the local man argument at Agalawatta,³⁹ at Horana,⁴⁰ at Mirigama,⁴¹ and at Matale.⁴² In return it had to meet the criticism that its candidate for Negombo was not really a man from the area. The L.S.S.P. had to defend itself in several constituencies on this issue and this was most difficult in Puttalam.

The Government of Sir John Kotelawala had more than once indicated that it would look after the parochial needs of constituencies represented by the U.N.P. In the campaign

therefore the U.N.P. candidates made much of the wardship of constituencies. Practically every U.N.P. candidate who was also the sitting member wrote a booklet outlining his work for the constituency. Below is a summary of a U.N.P. Minister's statement in respect of his constituency wardship. The statement gave details of the land in the constituency distributed among landless peasants; it mentioned the new schools built; the improvements made to existing schools; the land allocated for new schools; the conversion of existing schools to higher grade central schools and the total cost to the Government of all these. It mentioned the improvements to local hospitals and the success of his efforts in persuading a number of philanthropists to donate money for hospital improvements. It recorded the number of roads and bridges built or improved in the constituency. It recorded the improvements to existing sub-post offices, the opening of a new one and the connection of telephone services to a number of these. It included the assistance given to village committees in obtaining electricity and the assistance given to cottage industries in the constituency. It showed the number and length of new irrigation channels constructed and the improvements to existing ones. Finally it recorded the assistance given to rural development societies in the constituency.⁴³

All this was in a way a record of the efforts of the M.P. in getting a share of the "pork-barrel" for the constituency. Almost

all U.N.P. sitting members issued a statement on lines similar to the above. That was not all. The U.N.P. claimed that wherever a constituency was represented by the U.N.P. much was done for it. It was claimed in Gampaha, for instance, that when the U.N.P. represented the constituency it was greatly improved while under the Opposition the constituency was neglected.⁴⁴ In the South, a similar argument was raised and the people were asked to compare the work done in Akuressa represented by the C.P. with the work done in neighbouring constituencies represented by the U.N.P.⁴⁵ In Bingiriya the U.N.P. asked the people to return the U.N.P. as the Opposition candidate could do little to bring about improvements.⁴⁶ This then was one of the common aspects of the U.N.P. constituency campaign.

This kind of U.N.P. campaign was met by the Opposition in a number of ways. In some cases they denied that their constituencies were neglected.⁴⁷ The Communist Party argued that if public service consisted only in the building of bridges, and hospitals and the macadamising of roads then even the Imperialists could claim to have been of service to the people.⁴⁸ On the other hand Opposition candidates who were also sitting members published statements of what they sought to do for the constituency and the country; thus the S.L.F.P. at Gampaha and Mawanella, and the V.L.S.S.P. at Kiriella.

The more interesting development, however, was the public debate on the role of the M.P.—the issue being posed between satisfying parochial requirements versus solving national problems.⁴⁹ The Opposition succeeded in shaking the public belief that a person who had made many improvements in the constituency deserved to be returned on that ground only. And finally the Opposition produced individuals who claimed that the U.N.P. M.P.s had promised various improvements which they subsequently failed to implement.⁵⁰

In several constituencies, where the candidate came from a philanthropic family or a family with a record of public service, much was sought to be made out of it for the candidate. In Agalawatta, Mr. Anil Moonasinghe's (L.S.S.P.) connections with the Hewavitarana (Anagarika Dharmapala) family were greatly emphasised. In Mirigama, the Amaratunga family was mentioned as the great freedom fighters with F. R. Senanayake and D. B. Jayatillaka.⁵¹ The constituency campaign was not without its humour. One candidate mentioned among his claims to be elected the fact that he was chosen the best sportsman of his school in 1921.⁵² Another claimed his appointment to a Parliamentary Secretaryship as an honour to his constituency.⁵³

IV.

Campaign Methods.

The parties and candidates met the electorate directly at public meetings and in some cases in house to house canvassing. The highlight of the election meeting campaign in each constituency was the visit of the party leader. Since the election came to be polarised into a choice between Sir John and Mr. Bandaranaike, the visit of either to a constituency was the occasion for the bigger election meetings. Sir John Kotelawala as leader of the U.N.P. addressed over 750 meetings in different parts of the country. He visited every constituency where a U.N.P. candidate was contesting. Often he addressed a large number of meetings, each of a short duration in different parts of the constituency he was visiting. No effort was spared to dramatise the leader's visit. Often enough he was conducted in a procession with all the traditional paraphernalia, to the venue of the mass-meeting. Guards of honour were mounted. Jayamangala Gathas were recited in his honour. Pandals were erected on his route. Sandesayas were presented. Often enough also the visit of the Prime Minister was used to get him to open some new building—be it a new class-room for a school or a new wing for a maternity hospital. Every such occasion was used for a political speech.

The M.E.P. leader also undertook an electoral tour. He visited all the constituencies

where the M.E.P. was contesting and some constituencies where the L.S.S.P. or the C.P. were meeting the U.N.P. The clamour for Mr. Bandaranaike was too great to be satisfied by his personal visits. A large number of his speeches therefore were recorded and relayed at various election meetings. The M.E.P. leader's tour in each constituency was so arranged as to enable him to visit every important part of the constituency—especially villages and townships. The day's tour usually ended with a mass-meeting in a central place. Or in the alternative he addressed about 5-10 meetings each of short duration. On the 31st of March 1956 when Mr. Bandaranaike visited Avissawella, he was scheduled to visit 27 villages before reaching the town for the big public meeting.

The candidates themselves were very active with regard to election meetings. The number and duration of meetings of different candidates, of course, varied from candidate to candidate and constituency to constituency. In a majority of the constituencies the U.N.P. candidate held at least one big mass-meeting each day, the biggest being on the day of the party leader's visit. The M.E.P. candidates were especially active. On the 29th of March, for instance, Mrs. Vimala Wijewardene and her speaking party visited 20 villages and townships. At Mawanela the M.E.P. candidate held daily election meetings and these were increased to about 3 meetings a day after the 20th of March and the duration of each meeting came

down to about an hour. In this way the candidate toured every part of his constituency. The L.S.S.P. and the C.P. candidates also followed a similar pattern. As the polling days drew near, the number of meetings per day increased and their duration reduced. By the end of March it was usual for an L.S.S.P. candidate to hold between 3-6 meetings a day. When the party's national leaders were scheduled to address a meeting, the pattern was slightly different. It was usual to hold one large mass-meeting in a central spot and the meeting was normally preceded by slogan-shouting, flag-waving processions, by the youth leagues and other ancillary party organisations. It was also not uncommon to relay recorded speeches of Mr. Bandaranaike at L.S.S.P. meetings as for instance on 1.4.56 at Agalawatte.

From the point of view of election meetings the day began as early as 8 a. m. At Hakmana the U.N.P. meeting schedule for the 21st and 22nd of March began at 8 a. m. Usually a candidate's meeting programme came to an end by 7 p.m. Such a schedule could not be strictly followed when a party leader was expected to address meetings in a constituency. Mr. Bandaranaike especially was delayed at each stop with the result that his meetings tour went on sometimes into the early hours of the morning. For instance, a meeting scheduled for 7 p.m. was addressed at 2 a.m. the next morning.⁵⁴

A candidate's constituency meetings were addressed by local speakers. In the case of the M.E.P. the speaking team was headed by Buddhist priests. Some chief priests presided over U.N.P. meetings and in Muslim areas, Muslim dignitaries were persuaded to speak, usually on behalf of the U.N.P.

The venues of election meetings were common to all parties. A public park, a junction, a market-place, a school compound or a roadside, all served as venues for public meetings. When the meeting was scheduled to be addressed by a party leader, flags of the party colour decorated the scene—the U.N.P. green, the M.E.P. blue and red and the L.S.S.P. and C.P. red. Sometimes the Opposition succeeded in stringing buns across the P.M.'s route as a protest against the withdrawal of the free mid-day meal for school children. Election meetings were hectic and charged with excitement, sometimes bordering on hysteria. Speakers often worked themselves up to a high-pitch of excitement and the language and allusions were by no means "parliamentary".

There was no party-pattern in house-to-house canvassing either. It depended more on the inclination of the candidate. There was much house to house canvassing in the Northern province. Muslim women went out canvassing in Pottuvil. The M.E.P. did so at Weligama and in several other constituencies. The U.N.P. was similarly active in Dehiowita and Polonnaruwa. The L.S.S.P. was lactive in Balangoda.⁵⁵ House-to-house canvassing was

not general. Candidates sent leaflets excusing themselves from the task, e.g. the L.S.S.P. candidate at Wellawatta-Galkissa. Several Independent candidates did no canvassing at all.⁵⁶

The campaign was carried on, however, in a leaflet war. The distribution of anti-U.N.P. pamphlets purporting to come from former U.N.Pers and anti-*Opposition* leaflets purporting to come from former *Opposition* supporters was common. Some anti-U.N.P. leaflets were printed in the U.N.P. green and some anti-left leaflets were printed in red. When the U.N.P. at Matara printed a leaflet with the heading "Why Matara rejects Communism?" a C.P. pamphlet carried the heading "Why Matara wants Communism". When a gentleman from Dandagamuwa distributed a leaflet explaining why he resigned from the S.L.F.P. to join the U.N.P., another published a statement giving reasons why he joined the S.L.F.P.⁵⁷

The pamphlets and leaflets contained not merely the usual arguments already discussed. They contained slogans disparaging the other party. The M.E.P. was described as an assorted pickle and a string-hopper. Sir John Kotelawala was described as an Englishman who had been immersed in a tub of tar. The pamphlets also sought to win support by capitalising on the religious or historical associations of the party symbols.^a The U.N.P. built round the traditional associations of its symbol, the Elephant. At Wariyapola the

^a See the Chapter on Electoral Arrangements.

U.N.P. associated the party symbol with Dutugemunu's Royal Elephant which led his army when it stormed the Tamil forts of Elara. In several constituencies the voters were urged to support the Elephant of many traditional associations. Among the allegorical and historical allusions the following were common: the elephant Nalagiri who vowed to reach enlightenment; the elephant that will be the vehicle of the next Lord Buddha;⁵⁸ the elephant which in ancient times was sent round to choose an incumbent to a vacant throne;⁵⁹ the elephant that appeared to Maya^b when she dreamt of the conception of Siddharta and so on. The M.E.P. replied that it was an elephant which Mara (Satan) sent drunk and excited to kill the Lord Buddha who but raised his Hand (the M.E.P. symbol) to bring him under control.⁶⁰ The M.E.P. too played upon its party symbol:

*To the Hand you raise to worship the
Triple Gem,
To the Hand you raise to respect your parents
To the Hand like gold you need for all
To the Hand give your vote with pleasure.⁶¹*
(Translation)

Even the L.S.S.P. did not escape this type of electioneering. "Remember," it said, "that even when you return home it is the Key (the L.S.S.P. symbol) you will always need to open the door of your house."⁶² The C.P. asked the people to vote for the

^b Queen Mahamaya - mother of the Lord Buddha.

Star which lights the sky without fear or favour, without class distinctions, even when the moon has gone away.⁶³ The campaign round the symbols was not however a universal practice. It was confined to some constituencies only.

The pamphlets and leaflets did not come only from the party headquarters and from the candidates. Some L.S.S.P. leaflets purported to come from youth leagues, trade unions, election committees or "a group of voters". U.N.P. leaflets issued from the party, the candidate and the rest mostly from "a group of voters" or leading citizens. Some were composed as songs to popular tunes, verses to popular rhythms, doggerels on well-known poems and in Mirigama one was supposed to be a "message" from the late Mr. D. S. Senanayake. Some leaflets were in the form of an introduction of the candidate by the party leaders. Thus Dr. N. M. Perera introduced Mr. Bernard Soysa to Colombo South. Mr. Leslie Goonewardene introduced Mr. Meryl Fernando to Moratuwa. Mr. Bandaranaike introduced Major L. V. Gooneratne to Wellawatte-Galkissa. Some leaflets were letters by constituents urging others to vote for a particular candidate as for instance some in support of Dr. Hector Fernando at Negombo.⁶⁴

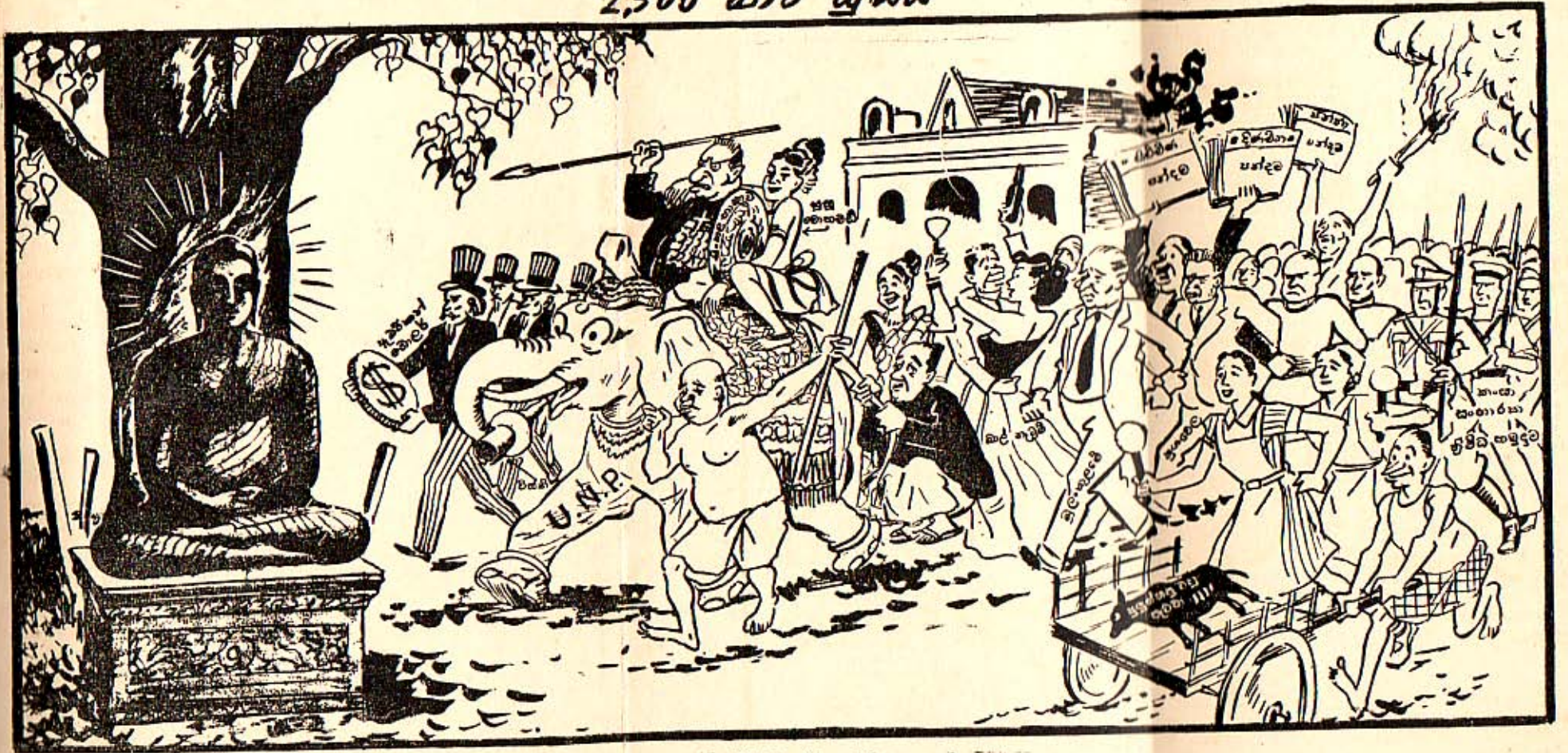
Each party's positive slogans were displayed in a large number of posters. The U.N.P. posters often carried a picture of Sir John or the candidate or both with one or more of the following slogans:

Stick to Success Vote U.N.P. ; Vote U.N.P. ; Vote U.N.P. for a real chance to get on ; For the future of your children vote U.N.P. ; To raise the citizen's standard of living Vote U.N.P. ; To save the country, the nation and religion from Communist danger ; Earnings Up Living Better ; Don't be misled by United Fronts ; The U.N.P. stands for Peace, Planned Progress and Prosperity ; It's Full Employment Vote U.N.P. ; He (Sir John) is just: Back him ; To promote learning and the arts Vote U.N.P.

U.N.P. posters were the largest in number, and had the greatest variety and colour. The English medium posters appeared to be directed at the middle-classes. There was, however, nothing dramatic in them. U.N.P. posters sought to make much of the Prime Minister's qualities and achievements.

The M.E.P.'s general posters carried a picture of Mr. Bandaranaike. The slogans included exhortations to the people to vote M.E.P. (or S.L.F.P.) to save the country, the nation and religion ; to eradicate poverty ; to win freedom. There were only a few general posters. Some merely asked the people to vote M.E.P. (or S.L.F.P.). Individual M.E.P. candidates varied the themes. At Mirigama the posters asked the people to vote for Mrs. Vimala Wijewardene to destroy the U.N.P., to work for the people and to make Sinhala the state language. With the L.S.S.P. "Defeat the U.N.P." was the most prominent slogan. Among other slogans were exhortations such as: To win a better

2,500 ටොන් බැර



From EKSATH BHIKKU PERAMUNA

Stick to Success Vote U.N.P. ; Vote U.N.P. for a real chance to get on ; For the future of your children vote U.N.P. ; To raise the citizen's standard of living Vote U.N.P. ; To save the country, the nation and religion from Communist danger ; Earnings Up Living Better ; Don't be misled by United Fronts ; The U.N.P. stands for Peace, Planned Progress and Prosperity ; It's Full Employment Vote U.N.P. ; He (Sir John) is just: Back him ; To promote learning and the arts Vote U.N.P.

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wage ; to obtain employment ; to build more houses ; to secure land for the landless. It appealed to the middle-class with English medium slogans such as: For Democratic liberty ; for National Unity.

Far more effective than the slogans were the Opposition cartoons directed against the U.N.P. The E.B.P. cartoon entitled "Mara Yudhaya" (The struggle with Satan) was conceived and executed with a skill which surprised even its authors. It brought within its purview the entire Buddhist-cultural criticism directed against the U.N.P. It was executed in an allegory which went direct to the hearts of the people.

Among the other effective cartoons were those directed against the U.N.P.'s rice policy. As effective were the pictures of the hartal dead distributed by the L.S.S.P. and of Sir John's barbecue dinner distributed by various Opposition groups.

As a whole the pamphlet war showed one major characteristic. The M.E.P. inspired by the E.B.P. used traditional allegories and religious allusions. Its mental images were conceived according to national-culture forms. Its disparaging slogans were derived from a similar inspiration. The U.N.P. followed suit though not so effectively. The L.S.S.P. and C.P. missed traditional allusions but benefitted greatly from the M.E.P.-E.B.P. campaign. The great debate was conducted in local terms and in local terminology. If nothing

else it was an unconscious concession to the fact that the swabhasha-speaking people were the political masters of the country.

This was also obvious from the preponderance of Sinhalese medium literature over English medium literature. Whatever the future role of English may be the electoral fight was largely conducted in the Sinhalese medium. In such a fight the national issues had to be posed in the Sinhalese idiom. The consequences of such a development cannot be ignored except at great political risk.

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4. Bauddha Lanka 13.3.56.
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7. L. 24.3.56.
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11. T. of C. 20.3.56.
12. Kalutara 7.
13. T. of C. 4.4.56.
14. Samasamajaya 17.3.56.
15. Maskeliya 21.
16. L. 5.3.56.
17. L. 13.3.56.
18. Peramuna 9.3.56.
19. C.D.N. 10.3.56.
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27. Ruwanwella 12.
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42. Matale 1.
43. Horana 2.
44. Gampaha 5.
45. Akuressa 3.
46. Bingiriya 1.
47. Akuressa 8.
48. do.
49. Kegalle 14.
50. Balangoda 9.
51. Mirigama 8 & Agalawatta 5.
52. Mawanella 2.
53. Wariyapola 4.
54. L. 1.4.56.
55. Sama Samajaya 23.3.56.
56. T. of C. 6.4.56.
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58. Galaha 3.
59. Agalawatta 4.
60. Horana 45.
61. Matugama 7.
62. Moratuwa 13..
63. Hakmana 14.
64. Negombo 4.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAMPAIGN—IN THE NORTH AND EAST

I.

The Federal Party

After the break-up of the United Front talks, the campaign in the Northern and Eastern provinces polarised into a fight between the Federal Party and its opponents. The Federal Party was established in 1949, as a split-away group of the Tamil Congress when the latter entered the late Mr. D. S. Senanayake's Government. The Federal Party did not have much success at the 1952 general election, only 2 out of 7 candidates of the F.P. being elected while 4 out of the 7 Tamil Congress candidates were returned.¹ And this in spite of the fact that Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam, the Tamil Congress leader in the Senanayake Government, had supported in 1949 the measures which excluded the greater part of the Indian Tamils from the vote. The Federal Party became popular only when the language issue came to the fore in the country. Tamil leaders in the U.N.P. had hoped and prayed that the U.N.P. would not give in to the Sinhala Only demand. When it was known that the U.N.P. was planning to accept Sinhala Only and sacrifice Tamil support, the stock of the

Tamil leaders who had associated with the U.N.P. fell drastically. It is true that they all resigned from the U.N.P. before the dissolution of Parliament and campaigned vigorously for the common Tamil demands. But it was the Federal Party's campaign that reaped the greater success and a sympathetic hearing from the Tamils.

The Federal Party declared that if Sinhala only were made the official language, it would mean that henceforth the Sinhalese people would become the "master-race" and the Tamil speaking people the "subject race" of this country. The logical issue of this would be the early economic liquidation of the Tamil-speaking people because the "master-race" could rightfully claim to be the absolute owners of the whole country and as such would be entitled to priority and even monopoly in all the economic benefits available to the citizens of this country, be it in the field of commerce, employment, colonisation or education, while the "subject race" could only expect to exist on the crumbs that fell from the master's table.² The language issue was not an issue in itself but affected the interests of the people who spoke the Tamil language. The denial of parity meant the denial of equality of opportunity to the Tamils in the affairs of government.³

The Federal party also feared the consequences of the Government's land-settlement policies. Much of the cultivable but uncultivated land of Ceylon lies in the Dry Zone in the Northern half of Ceylon and

in the Eastern province. Earlier governments from as far back as the State Council days, had begun the development of the North-Central province (a Sinhalese-speaking area). Much irrigation work had been completed and "colonists" had been settled. The later governments turned their attention to the large tract of land drained by the Gal Oya and the irrigation of the extreme north-west which were basically Tamil speaking areas. Since these schemes were nationally sponsored, at heavy cost to the common tax-payer, it was not possible to deny the alienation of land in these areas to the Sinhalese people also. It was also the policy of the Government to assist the new colonists financially till they found their feet in the new homesteads. Now this policy was carried out in all the land settlement schemes (called colonisation schemes) and it originated in the land settlements in the North-Central province. The land-hunger in Ceylon being what it is, the pressure from the M.P.s to recruit some landless from their constituencies for the colonisation schemes was great. Since the Sinhalese landless were greater in numbers than the Tamil landless, large numbers of Sinhalese settlers came to these new schemes, especially the multi-purpose scheme at Gal Oya. Naturally the numbers of Sinhalese in the Eastern province continued to increase. The Federal Party, hoping to establish a Federal Constitution on a linguistic basis, could not see this policy except as a threat to its cherished dreams. For if the

Sinhalese in the Eastern province grew in numbers that province was likely to opt out of a Tamil linguistic state. The Federal Party therefore opposed the settlement of Sinhalese in these land-settlement schemes. They called it an attempt by the Government to colonise the Tamil areas with Sinhalese and a Government-sponsored Sinhalese invasion of the traditional Tamil homelands. They said that there were many landless in the Northern and Eastern provinces as well and they all should be settled before the Sinhalese landless were permitted to come. The coming of Sinhalese settlers, they added, would create new socio-economic problems and the Tamils would become a minority in their own homelands (Northern and Eastern provinces).⁴ The exclusion of Sinhalese from nationally sponsored development schemes seemed logical and necessary to the Federal Party aiming at a Federal Constitution on a linguistic basis. Even those Tamil leaders who did not accept the policy of Federation nor the justice of excluding the Sinhalese had to fall in with the Federal Party demands because of the great communal appeal in its campaign.

The Federal Party also alleged that the Government had been responsible for many acts of discrimination against the Tamils. Similar arguments had been used by the Tamil Congress in its evidence before the Soulbury Commission in 1944. The Soulbury Commission however did not give much credence to these charges. The Federal

Party revived the self-same allegations and more. It was argued that since the assumption of power by the U.N.P., the public service had been closed to the Tamils. It was alleged that Tamil S.S.C. qualified persons were deliberately shut out of appointments; that marks in competitive examinations were distorted and, irrespective of the excellence of candidates, a communal ratio was sought to be maintained in the public service. It is indeed one of the unfortunate consequences of communal distrust that each community sees the same facts in a different light. The Sinhalese thought that the proportion of Tamils in the public service was six times the number its population warranted although in actual fact it was about three times. The Sinhalese thought that this undue proportion was due to unfair advantages which the Tamils had and also to the communalism of Tamil officers in senior positions. So while the Sinhalese thought the Tamils were communal, the Tamils thought that the Sinhalese were communal.

The political theory of the Federal Party was best expressed in a pamphlet entitled "The Tamilians in Ceylon and a Federal Constitution". It was argued here that a people speaking one language constitute a nation. So the Tamil-speaking people of Ceylon form one nation and the Sinhalese-speaking people another. The interests of two nations are inherently antagonistic and unless the two nations are kept apart in two separate compartments or "states" they are

driven to oppress and exploit each other and the majority race will have the upper hand always.

The only solution therefore is to make each language the state language in respect of all the contiguous areas where the majority of the people speak that language.⁵

The Manifesto of the Federal Party (20.3.56) gave some measure of concreteness to Federal ideas. The Federal Party Manifesto claimed that it was the bulwark of the Tamil-speaking people and of all minorities. It had stood firmly by its principles even in defeat. It hoped to establish a federal constitution in Ceylon. A federal government meant the joining together of two or more autonomous states into one government. If there were a federal government, Ceylon would be a country with two autonomous states—the Tamil state and the Sinhalese state.

When the I.T.A.K. (Federal Party) achieved its goal the form of federal government they hoped to have would be like that of Switzerland.....and Switzerland was very similar to Ceylon. There the form of government is such that 1% Laoeinish-speaking people have the same equality of status as the 6% Italian Swiss, the 21% French Swiss and the 72% German Swiss. "If we get federation the 69% Sinhalese people, the 23% Tamil speaking people,⁶ and the other minorities whose common language is English will all be equal. Sinhalese will become the state language of the Sinhalese

state, Tamil the state language of the Tamil state and English the language for interstate and foreign relations."

Except by federation there could be no true parity for the languages or equality of status for the people. In a unitary form of Government, countries which had two or more languages had minority problems and troubles. All new countries of the 20th century had followed to some extent the Swiss model of having a federation of language states such as Russia, India, Finland, Pakistan, etc.

Further the government in Switzerland is carried on through small area units called cantons. In like manner the Tamil state and the Sinhalese state would each be made up of several cantons and each of these cantons would have autonomous powers. It would not therefore be possible for the Batticaloa district^a to override Trincomalee district; or Jaffna to overrule Batticaloa; or Mannar to impose on Vavuniya. Besides, Tamil pockets in Sinhalese areas like Puttalam, Wellawatta, Nawalapitiya, Hatton etc., would become component cantons or half-cantons of the Tamil state; while Gal Oya, Tammankadai etc., might become Sinhalese cantons in the Sinhalese state. These doubtful areas would be settled by a census.

The Federal leaders would not be bought over by position or place in the government

^a One of the administrative districts into which Ceylon is divided.

to sell the birth-right and heritage of any of the minorities be it a minority of race, language, culture or religion. No safeguards for any of the minorities would be safe in a unitary form of government.....Every Federal Party candidate therefore pledged himself not to accept any office whatever under any Government till a Federal system was established and would not directly or indirectly lend any assistance to any Government that did not grant parity of status to Sinhalese and Tamil. He would not support any Government that did not put a stop to schemes of Government-sponsored Sinhalese colonisation in the Northern and Eastern provinces. He would not support any Government that did not liberalise the citizenship laws of the country so that many stateless persons who were not Indian nationals could become Ceylon citizens. The existing citizenship laws were made to cripple and take away half the Tamil strength.⁷

The Federal Party's official name is Ilankai Thamil Arasu Kadchi, the Ceylon Tamil Arasu Party. The word "Arasu" is somewhat ambiguous and gave rise to much disputation as to exactly what the Federal Party stood for. It was suggested for instance that the word "Arasu" meant "Sovereignty" and not "Government"; that the Tamil word for federal is "Samashdi" which was not being used in the party's official statements.⁸ Mr. Chelvanayakam, leader of the Federal Party, declared however, that I.T.A.K. really meant an autonomous

Tamil state federated in a federal Ceylon.⁹ Mr. C. Mannunayagam, Joint-Treasurer of the Federal Party, stated that the Federal Party was "a party pledged to secure their freedom by the establishment of an autonomous Tamil state on a linguistic basis within the framework of a federal union of Ceylon".¹⁰

Several Tamil leaders had at several places demanded a Tamil Nad or an independent Tamil state, both to meet the Federal Party and also to express their protest against Sinhala Only. The Federal party did not support this programme. It felt that an independent and separate Tamil state could not be established without an open revolt by the people of the Northern and Eastern provinces. Such a policy the Federal Party would not support. It declared that it would only use constitutional and peaceful methods through Ahimsa and Satyagraha on the Indian model.¹¹ It also felt that there was a possibility of achieving a federal Ceylon whereas a separate independent Tamil state in Ceylon was outside the realms of possibility. It felt that the Sinhalese feared Indian domination and that the Tamil Nad movement would only increase Sinhalese hostility.¹²

On the other hand some of the statements of Federal leaders gave cause for misunderstanding. Mr. Rajavarithiam was reported to have said that he hoped Ceylon would follow Pakistan's lead in solving the language problem.¹³ Mr. Vanniasingham explained

that by Tamil Arasu his party meant Tamil state like Madras state. Such a Tamil state could either be independent or a federal unit.¹⁴

There were two main issues in the Federal Party's programme with which its opponents could not agree. The first was its demand for a federal constitution. Much of the campaign in the north and east narrowed down to Federalism versus anti-Federalism. As such this issue will be considered later. The second was the determination of the Federal Party to get every Tamil candidate to pledge non-cooperation with any Government which did not grant parity and did not stop the entry of Sinhalese settlers into the Government's land settlement schemes. Several Independent Tamil candidates refused to sign such a pledge of non-cooperation, e.g. Mr. Sinnebbe of Batticaloa, and Mr. Nalliah of Kalkudah. Sir K. Vaithianathan while agreeing that Federalism might be an ideal solution, declined to endorse the Federal Party methods which alienated Sinhalese goodwill. "The Tamil-speaking leaders," he wrote, "have tried non-cooperation before and it would be suicidal to try it again except as a last resort when everything else has been tried and proved to be a failure."¹⁵ Mr. Nalliah felt that the Tamils should gain the goodwill of the majority community. By such goodwill and cooperation they could achieve many of their aims.¹⁶ Both moderate and left-wing opinion supported the principle of responsive cooperation. "What the country

needs to-day," wrote the 'Tribune' of 17th February, "is a positive approach of friendship and cooperation between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. A temporary communalism on one side (let it be language hysteria or Tamil Nad) should not be made the excuse for further communalism. Faced with the current outbreak of an overdose of Sinhalese communalism the Tamils must meet the situation squarely with a programme and policy that is firmly wedded to the principle of cooperation with the Sinhalese in a united democratic Ceylon." Thus while all the Tamil candidates supported parity, and all the non-Marxist candidates also supported non-colonisation, only the Federal Party stood for absolute non-cooperation except on its own terms. Needless to add that the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. while supporting parity had nothing else in common with the other candidates in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

II.

The Pressure-Groups.

The campaign in the Northern and Eastern provinces, as in the rest of the country, was not conducted in a vacuum. It was conditioned by the existence of a large number of interest-groups but unlike in the rest of the country the interest groups that were involved were largely communal ones. Of these the English-educated Tamils, though not organised as a group, were a dominating

factor. The Sinhala Only movement helped to bring about an intense feeling of togetherness among the Tamils. But the political thinking, the clarification of issues and the formulation of political formulae were in the hands of the English-educated Tamils. Apart from the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. which declared and supported a policy of swabasha, the other Tamil leaders' opposition was to Sinhalese and not to English. The Federal Party was of course the only one to campaign openly for it. The Federal Party manifesto declared that English which, according to its own calculation, was the language of 3 per cent. of the people should be the language of inter-state communication in a federal constitution. Dr. J. T. Amarasingham speaking at a Federal Party meeting argued that Tamils should resist all attempts to force Sinhalese on them; but that English should be made the official language to establish unity among the different communities in the island.¹⁷

Caste.

Among the Tamils where Hinduism is the predominant religion a considerable section of the population belongs to the depressed classes. The depressed classes were denied many ordinary civil and social rights not by means of law but by an unspoken conspiracy of prejudice. The attempt to build a feeling of Tamil togetherness gave rise to an examination of the problem of these oppressed people. For instance

Mr. G. Nalliah asked "whether those leaders who were crying out hoarse that the Tamils were being robbed of their rights, did not realise that there were among them a section of Tamils who had been denied even their ordinary rights and despised as untouchables. What had these leaders done so far to give the depressed classes their fundamental and elementary rights?"¹⁸ A Sinhalese organisation called the Tri Sinhala Peramuna also had sought to capitalise on these differences. It set afoot a campaign suggesting that these so-called depressed classes were the original Sinhalese inhabitants who had been subjugated by the incoming South Indian invasions of the ancient period. The Tri Sinhala Peramuna therefore welcomed the Tamil depressed classes as their Sinhalese brothers and urged them to support Sinhala Only, cast off their oppressive chains and join the Sinhalese as brothers-in-arms to gain their rightful place. The depressed classes issue was no minor one and the Federal Party sought to meet it. It was reported that the Federal Party had entered into an agreement with the All-Ceylon Minority Tamils Association (depressed classes) that if the Federal Party were returned to Parliament in sufficient strength the Party would seek to get representatives of the depressed classes elected to the Senate and seek to remove their existing social disabilities.¹⁹ The Federal Party declared that it would help the Harijans,^a work

^a the depressed classes.

for their freedom and seek permission for them to enter the temples with the cooperation and goodwill of high-caste Tamils.

The general opinion in the Tamil areas, however, was not as liberal as that of the Federal Party. Mr. S. V. Sinnadurai was reported to have spoken thus at a meeting of the Navatkuli Nanneri Sangam in January 1956.—“Whatever grievances the so-called minority Tamils may have over caste-differences they should not forget that Tamil is their mother-tongue and that they are Tamils by race and that their loyalty to their language, religion and race must remain unimpeachable.... Any attempt by leaders of minority Tamils to exploit the language issue at the present moment by trying to bring about a rift in the unity of Tamil ranks by threatening to support Sinhalese unless all social barriers were broken down forthwith, could be regarded as an act of treachery and would set at naught the growing feeling among the higher castes in favour of the removal of caste distinctions. The customs of centuries cannot be done away with in a short interval and the acceleration of the growth of a new social order rests entirely with the minority Tamils themselves. This could be achieved.....if the depressed classes won the affection and esteem of the higher classes, by cultivating a more dignified line of conduct, cleaner ways of living and by refraining from an open show of antagonism. They should improve their moral standards and their leaders should first bend

their efforts to this task and an improvement of their social status would follow as surely as day follows night”.²⁰ In the North therefore the caste issue was important. The language debate brought into prominence the social divisions and strengthened the desire of the depressed classes to fight for their rights.

Muslims.

There were a little over 500,000 Muslims in the country in 1956. Of these a little more than half were in the Sinhalese-speaking provinces. The Muslims were organised into two associations on a communal basis. Since most of the well-to-do and politically active Muslims lived in the Sinhalese-speaking areas the official decision of these two organisations was in favour of Sinhala Only. Several Muslim leaders did not accept this position. It was contended that the language of the Muslims in the Eastern province was Tamil. Generally speaking therefore the Muslims were divided on the language issue. But many of their more prominent leaders were in favour of Sinhala Only. As a result even the Muslims in the Eastern province were not willing to follow the Tamil leaders on their tactics to win parity. Few Muslim candidates were willing to declare for non-cooperation with any elected government. And the Muslims who supported the idea of a federal constitution were few indeed. Senator A. M. A. Azeez, a Muslim leader who supported parity,

was quite clear on the subject. "This theory of a Tamil-speaking nation," he wrote, "is historically inaccurate and politically mischievous there are at least two distinct communities whose language is Tamil and they are the Tamils and the Muslims. While language and citizenship unite these two communities—both of them minorities—religion and culture separate them."²¹ In the Eastern province therefore the number of Muslims willing to accept the Federal Party ticket was much less than half the total number of Muslim candidates in the province. Mr. A. H. Macan Markar, Independent (Kalkudah) denounced Federalism.²² The Muslim supporters of Mr. Mohamed Ali, Independent (Muttur) urged him not to contest as an F. P. candidate even though he showed such an inclination.²³ Mr. M. N. S. Mohamed Marakaiar of the Trincomalee Mosque campaigned against the Federal Party. The Tamil Congress and the I.T.A.K. which had represented Trincomalee for the past nine years, he is reported to have said, had done nothing for the Muslims.²⁴ Mr. M. A. Abdul Majid, Independent, (Kalmunai) promised to support a Bandaranaike Government.²⁵ Gate Mudaliyar Kariapper of Kalmunai was also lukewarm in his support of the Federal Party.

There was considerable difference of opinion and interest between the Tamils and the Muslims in the Eastern province. The Muslims felt that the Tamils enjoyed an unduly dominant position in the educational

sphere. The Muslims were not prepared to accept the *bona fides* of the Tamil leaders on its face value, so much so that the Federal Party assured the Muslims that it would play fair by the non-Tamil minorities.²⁶ Thus while the language issue joined the Muslims of Eastern province with the Tamils, they had divergent interests in most other issues. Even on language the Muslims did not feel as strongly as the Tamils.

The Indian Tamils.

The Indian problem begins with the introduction of plantations to Ceylon in the 1820's. At that time the population of Ceylon had declined to about 2½ million.^a When large-scale plantations were begun therefore, it was not possible to obtain local labour. The Ceylon peasant saw no reason to accept an employment which inhibited his way of life without greater economic benefits. However the plantation owners solved the labour problem by importing labour from South India. Today the Indian Tamils have grown to over a million out of a total population of about 10 million.

The political aspect of the problem arose when the Donoughmore Commission of 1927 recommended universal franchise for Ceylon. The national leaders protested against the equal treatment of Indian immigrants and Ceylon nationals with regard to franchise and ultimately the Colonial Office

(a) It is estimated that about 1000 A.D. the population of Ceylon was very much larger than this. From then to 1801 no proper estimates are available.

agreed to a compromise. Only those Indians, barring those who qualified under the property qualification, who had obtained a certificate of permanent settlement were to be entitled to the vote. Since there was no Ceylon citizenship law at the time universal franchise was given to the nationals of Ceylon on the basis of domicile. Not more than a few thousand Indians obtained certificates of permanent settlement. But about 150,000-250,000 were enfranchised because of the lax administration under the domicile clause.

The economic depression and the malaria epidemic which hit Ceylon in the 1930's brought to light the economic aspect of the Indian problem. The presence of a large Indian population in Ceylon came to be regarded as a restriction of employment opportunities for the Ceylonese. The Board of Ministers therefore set about applying a policy which excluded Indians from government employment, except in special circumstances and later, of tightening the laws regulating Indian immigration to Ceylon.

The decade between the mid-thirties and the end of the war only emphasised both the political and economic aspects. By 1946 the total population had risen to over 6 million and was increasing rapidly. The pressure of population in the rural sector led to inadequacy of land and to fragmentation on the one hand and to a willingness on the part of the Ceylon peasant to seek employment in the estates on the other.

He saw that while there was under-employment in the peasant sector, there was regular employment in the estate-sector. While all the adults in an Indian estate family could obtain employment thus achieving comparative prosperity, the one earner in a peasant family was not even sure of employment or of an adequate income. It is therefore understandable that the up-country peasant saw a rival in the Indian Tamil.

Under the laws of 1947 this Indian population could control about 15 per cent. of the legislature. Soon after Independence therefore, Mr. D. S. Senanayake's government first enacted a citizenship law and then restricted franchise to citizens. Under the law, citizenship was confined, barring exceptions of little significance, to those with rights of descent. This excluded almost the entire Indian population. So the Government passed the Indian and Pakistani (Citizenship) Act to liberalise the opportunities for persons of Indian and Pakistani origin.^a

Even so Mr. Senanayake assumed that no more than 50,000 Indians would become citizens under its provisions. Mr. D. S. Senanayake had been concerned with the political aspect of the Indian problem. With Mr. Dudley Senanayake, the economic aspect loomed large. The number of persons who could be given citizenship came to be regarded as the absorbable maximum. It was

^a The Citizenship Act 1948 and the Indian and Pakistani (Citizenship) Act 1949 were parts of the same scheme.

on this basis that talks were opened with the Indian Government but before any settlement could be reached Mr. Dudley Senanayake resigned. During Sir John Kotelawala's time a further dimension was added to the Indian problem, the cultural one. Although unrestricted immigration was stopped in the 1940's illicit Indian immigration continued. The U.N.P. had made much of the danger of the Indians in the 1952 general election campaign. The fear of illicit immigrants further strengthening the sizeable Indian pocket in Sinhalese areas grew. When the Federal Party espoused the cause of Indian Tamils as part of a Tamil-speaking nation, Indian Tamils came to be regarded as a threat to the Sinhalese language and culture as well. So when Sir John Kotelawala concluded an interim agreement with Mr. Nehru in 1954, a knowledge of the language of the area—i.e. in effect Sinhalese—was laid down as the principle of absorption.

The Federal Party from the beginning espoused the cause of the Indian Tamils in Ceylon. The preponderant majority of Indian Tamils in Ceylon resided in the Sinhalese-speaking areas. With the Federal Party's theory of linguistic nations and cantonal government, the Indian Tamils appeared to be a part of the Tamil nation. On the other hand the leader of the Tamil Congress had voted with the Government to pass the Citizenship Act of 1948 which excluded the majority of them from the vote. Thus the Tamils did not stand together on the question of citizenship for the Indians.

Nor were the Indian Tamil organisations willing to take an active part in support of a party which appeared to be sectarian. A Federal Constitution would still leave most of the Indians in the Sinhalese areas. Nor could they support a linguistic nation theory and expect Sinhalese sympathy for their demands. It appeared also that the Indian Tamil, being largely an estate worker, was not as much agitated over the Tamil language as the Ceylon Tamil who was by and large interested in employment in the public service. An Indian Tamil wrote thus to the "Tribune":—The agitation regarding this (language) question is sponsored by the Tamils of Jaffna and Batticaloa. The Tamils with an Indian ancestry are not taking part..... Many of them speak Sinhalese well and their Tamil has deteriorated.... A separate Tamil Nad makes no appeal to them....."²⁷ Nor is it correct to assume that all the Ceylon Tamils espoused the cause of the Indian Tamils. For instance Mr. Natesan alleged that the Federal Party was seeking to collect subscriptions from Indian businessmen on the pretext that it was championing the cause of Indians in Ceylon. In his electorate the F.P. leader referred to the Indians as "Vaddakathaiyar" (northerners) but in front of the Indians the Federalists spoke of them as brothers.²⁸

The campaign in the Northern and Eastern provinces, it was mentioned earlier, resolved itself into a fight between the Federal Party and its opponents. The latter largely consisted

of the ex-U.N.P. Independents, Muslim Independents, the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. All these opposing groups attacked the Federal Party on its federal plank.

III.

Federalism

The arguments used against a Federal constitution were of many sorts. There was, for instance, the constitutional argument. Mr. Kadaramer, Independent candidate for Batticaloa, argued thus: The Federal Party can never achieve its goal because only the Tamil-speaking people support it. To create a federation a number of states has first to be created which means the division of the country without a consensus of opinion. Absence of marked inequalities among the component states is another condition of Federation. Otherwise the larger unit will dominate the smaller. The Swiss ideal of Federation provides no judicial safeguards to the minorities because the Supreme Court has no power to declare laws unconstitutional. The Swiss methods of initiative and referendum, i.e. majority rule, are the very things which the Federalists oppose in a unitary constitution. "Let the Federalist produce a map of Switzerland. Does it make as ridiculous a map as the one of Ceylon proposed by him? Does not even common sense suggest to him that there should be geographical contiguity among the cantons of the various states?"²⁹ Mr. C. Arulampalam, Independent candidate,

cited a number of countries where federalism had failed to solve problems such as communalism and racialism, e.g. U.S.A. and the Union of South Africa, where the negro problem still exists.³⁰

There was also the economic argument. Mr. Natesan declared that the Federal Party was building castles in the air ignoring the financial implications underlying the conception of Federation. The people in the Tamil areas would, according to F.P. proposals, be reduced to starvation. For want of local sources of revenue no federal unit could hope to be sustained by subsidies from the central government for the maintenance of its schools, payment of its teachers, maintenance of its hospitals, for grants to its village communities and other purposes which vitally affected the life of the people. Because the Tamil people were now under a unitary government they were entitled to share all the amenities provided by a welfare state drawing most of its revenue from other than Tamil-speaking areas.³¹ Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam argued that Federalism would confine Tamil employment to the two provinces "to the exclusion of the vast wealth-producing areas occupied by the Sinhalese and which now helped the economy of the Tamils."³² Mr. V. S. Karthigesu speaking in support of Mr. V. Kumaraswamy declared that 65% of Tamil government servants, Tamil traders and merchants, including many Federalists who lived in Sinhalese areas were better off there; but under a federal form

of government.....there would be no resources from tea, rubber and coconut from the South.³³

Thirdly, there was the philosophical objection to the Federal Party theories. The "Tribune" declared that the I.T.A.K. was a communal organisation because only a Tamil and that also a Tamil interested in a separate linguistic province—could belong to it. It was communal because it was concerned only with the problems of Tamils in a particular territory. "The ideology of the Tamil Arasu derives from a false premise that any group speaking a common language constitutes a separate nation and that if they live in a contiguous territory they have a right to a separate state federally connected if necessary to other states.....If the bulk of the Tamil Arasu propaganda is analysed, it will be found that it is racial in content and outlook".³⁴

Fourthly, it was contended that Federalism would not solve even the Tamil language problem. Senator S. R. Kanaganayagam quoted Berriedale Keith to argue that even in Canada, a country which the Federalists now cited as a model for their party's objective, the official language of the central government was English (i.e. the language of the majority). Mr. Balasundaram of Jaffna was of the view that by the separatist policy of the Federalists, the Tamils would have to be satisfied with having Tamil in two provinces only while Sinhalese would be used

in the other seven provinces. Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam feared that the Federal policy would force the Tamils in Sinhalese areas to learn Sinhalese.

And finally the Federal Party was censured for its programme of action. Mr. S. Nadesan pointed out that the Sinhalese would never concede federation to the Tamils under the existing conditions and if the Federalists followed the line of action envisaged by them it would lead to civil war. A federal constitution would be an ideal solution to the problems facing the country but it should be based on communism. The I.T.A.K. has chosen a path which would lead the masses to untold misery. The federalists were hoping to achieve their end by organising hartals, hoisting black-flags and non-cooperation, but this was utterly impossible for a tiny minority group like the Tamils. It was true that India won independence by means of non-violent satyagraha, but that was a fight by 300 million people against a small minority.³⁵

The Federal Party, on the other hand, opposed the ex-U.N.P. Tamils and other Independents on two counts. It pointed out that the ex-U.N.P. Tamils had failed the Tamil people with regard to the language issue. They had betrayed the Tamils by supporting the Citizenship Act which weakened Tamil strength. The U.N.P. was prepared to sacrifice the Tamils to win Sinhalese popularity and if the ex-U.N.P. Tamils were returned they would go back to the U.N.P. fold.

Many allegations were made and election stories spread about that the U.N.P. was financing the ex-U.N.P. Tamils. In return the Federal Party had to face the charge that it was in secret alliance with the S.L.F.P.

The second argument was that the Tamils should return a well-organised and disciplined party to safeguard Tamil interests. Mr. Vanniasingham warned against Independent candidates who were "like cattle let loose to nibble at any pasture offered them".³⁶ And in March Mr. Chelvanayakam was asking the Tamils to vote for a party.

Although the L.S.S.P.'s national leaders were popular in the north for the party's stand for parity, it was the challenge by the Communist Party that was considered serious. The Federal Party therefore devoted much time to criticism of the C.P. It alleged that the C.P. was insincere; that it was unlikely to be returned in strength to Parliament and so would be ineffective; that it was against religion; that it did not accept non-violence; that it did not oppose Sinhalese colonisation, and that it was basically a Sinhalese dominated party.

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CHAPTER IX

ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

The arrangements for the general election of 1956 were in the charge of the Commissioner of Parliamentary Elections—an officer of the public service subject to public service rules like any other officer. Although the Opposition had pressed that the office of the Commissioner of Parliamentary Elections should be one similar to that of the Auditor-General in its independence from the executive, the suggestion was deferred for consideration in time for future elections.

There were 95 seats to be filled by election from 89 constituencies. The first task was to arrange for the number and situation of polling booths in each constituency. The number of polling booths at the election was 2,427 and approximately 2,000 voters were allocated to each polling booth on the principle of geographical contiguity. The Government Agents were appointed as Returning Officers. Apart from them about 27,000 officers were required to man these polling stations. Senior Presiding Officers and Junior Presiding Officers and their assistants were appointed and training classes were held for the presiding officers. Members of the public service were chosen for these offices, and arrangements were made for officers on duty in a particular polling booth to cast their votes in that booth.

The electoral registers used for the 1956 general elections were those of May 1954. Much Opposition criticism was levelled at the manner in which the electoral registers were prepared. Opposition parties considered the registering most unsatisfactory. Many public men and public institutions took up the cry. The Bandarawela Urban Council, for instance, passed a motion criticising the electoral register for the Bandarawela electorate on the ground that the names of many persons dead for many years were included in the register.¹ Much should not be made of this criticism as the defects of the registers were not deliberate partisan acts, but those arising from the laxity of poorly paid investigators employed for the task. The great danger in this, however, was the opportunity for impersonation.

A far more serious defect was the decision to hold the election on three days and the consequences expected from it. It is interesting to observe that in the 1952 general election the polling was spread over four days. In that election Sir Ivor Jennings noted that all the elected Ministers' elections were fixed for the first two days and all the Opposition leaders' for the last day. "The effect of this arrangement was," he wrote, "that during the election week most of the Opposition leaders were tied to their own constituencies while the Ministers, having won or lost in the first two days, were free to devote their attention to their opponents.

What is more, the U.N.P. workers and vehicles, which were numerous, could be used to elect the Ministers on the first two days and to defeat the Opposition leaders on the last two days."²

Sir Ivor refrained from a judgement on the consequences of such an arrangement on the voters. There is, he admitted, the temptation to jump on the band-wagon. On the other hand, if one's party were sure of winning or losing, it was unnecessary to vote for it. If one party were getting too strong, there may be a temptation to vote for the Opposition or the elector may vote on his personal preference for a candidate irrespective of the party.³

In 1956, the polling days were reduced to three—the 5th, 7th and 10th of April. There was a suspicion that in 1956 also, the 1952 pattern of fixing the dates of polling of the various electorates to suit the government party would be followed. Mr. Bandaranaike therefore wrote on the 9th of March to the Commissioner of Elections requesting him to arrange polling dates for different constituencies in a manner that would give no political advantage to any political party. He suggested, for instance, that if the polling date for the U.N.P. leader's constituency were fixed for the first day and that for the M.E.P. leader's constituency for the last day it would be "an act of gross discrimination."⁴

The Commissioner regarded this letter as an act of interference with his duties,

and the impression was given that the polling dates would be fixed entirely on the technical needs and circumstances of organising the polling arrangements.

On the first day 37 electorates went to the polls to elect 42 members. The U.N.P. held 36 of these seats. One was held by a U.N.P. member who contested in 1956 as an Independent. Five seats were held by the Opposition, three of these being held by them in multi-member constituencies. In other words, of the 37 constituencies only two were held entirely by the Opposition. One was held by an Independent. Others were held by the U.N.P. completely or partially. Of the 36 sitting members contesting on the first day, 15 were Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries. The majority of these constituencies were also rural constituencies where the U.N.P. had so far always been strong. On the last day 30 electorates went to the polls. Sixteen of them were in the Northern and Eastern provinces where the U.N.P. was not contesting but where several pro-U.N.P. Independents were. It is likely that the band-wagon incentive might have operated in the Eastern province if the U.N.P. had won on the first two days. Of the balance of 14 seats, 10 were held by the Opposition. The M.E.P. leaders, Mr. Bandaranaike and Mr. Philip Gunawardene, and the L.S.S.P. leader, Dr. N. M. Perera, were to face the elections on the last day. On the 2nd day 22 electorates electing 23 members went to the polls.

Of these 13 were held by the Opposition, 9 by the U.N.P. and one by the Speaker. Thus on the first and second days, electorates held by 45 U.N.P. members were to go to the polls. On the second and third days, electorates held by 23 Opposition members (apart from those of the Northern and Eastern provinces) were to go to the polls.

The way that polling days were fixed for the different constituencies in 1956 is reminiscent of the 1952 pattern. Generally speaking, the seats contested by the U.N.P. leaders had their elections on the first day. Seats contested by the more prominent Opposition leaders went to the polls on the last day. There is also reason to believe that those seats likely to return U.N.P. members had their elections on the first day. On the other hand, a good many doubtful U.N.P. seats and likely Opposition seats went to the polls on the last day. Thus the seat of Kelaniya doubtful from the U.N.P. point of view, where the U.N.P. Minister, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene, was being contested by Mr. R. G. Senanayake was fixed for the last day. So were also the seats expected to be won by Mr. Bandaranaike, Mr. Philip Gunawardene and Dr. N. M. Perera.

If this pattern coincided with the technical requirements of electoral arrangements it was indeed a coincidence thought to be of great advantage to the U.N.P. The Opposition, however, was unwilling to accept any view other than the one that polling dates were fixed under political pressure from the ruling party. However, as the result proved, even if the polling

dates had been fixed in a manner acceptable to fair minded opinion, the U.N.P. might not have fared any worse.

An important feature of the 1956 general election was the great importance of party. The allocation of one symbol to all candidates of one party (except in multi-member constituencies) also in a way helped to strengthen the party idea. When universal franchise was introduced into Ceylon in 1931, there was a doubt as to whether the considerable numbers of illiterate voters could use the normal method of marking ballot papers. During the Donoughmore Constitution period therefore, the method of coloured boxes was utilised. This was indeed a simple device. Each candidate in a particular constituency was allocated a colour. In each polling booth were placed a number of coloured boxes corresponding to the colours allocated to the candidates. The voter, when he received his ballot paper went into the covered enclosure of the booth and dropped it into the box painted in the colour of the candidate he favoured.

This method, though simple, was open to many abuses. If the secrecy of the ballot was to be maintained, the presiding officer could not watch the enclosure where the ballot boxes were kept. Therefore there was no reasonable way of checking whether the voter dropped the ballot paper into a box or carried it away with him to be sold at a price. It was alleged in 1936, for instance, that ballot-brokers bought ballot papers

through this means and helped a well-to-do candidate to win an election purely by the unfair use of his wealth.

The seriousness of this charge was accepted and in the general election of 1947, the symbol method was substituted. Both in 1947 and in 1952 a symbol was allocated to each candidate. In the ballot paper the candidate's name as well as the symbol was printed. The voter took his ballot paper, went into an enclosure, marked his cross in the square adjacent to his candidate's symbol, brought it along to the table where the common ballot-box was placed and dropped it in the box in the presence of the presiding officer. In this way the illegal buying of ballot papers was greatly reduced.

In 1956 a further advance was made in allocating one symbol to one party. The symbols chosen were those which were thought to be politically neutral. Thus the hammer and sickle were not allowed as a symbol. Neutral symbols like the Elephant, Hand, Key, Star, Wheel, House, etc., were chosen and the different parties drew lots. The U.N.P. drew the Elephant; the M.E.P. the Hand; the L.S.S.P., the Key; the C.P., the Star; the Federal Party, the House. Several other symbols like the Scales were also used to allocate symbols for the Independents and/or where more than one candidate from one party were contesting in a multi-member constituency.

Although each party was thus allocated a symbol for election purposes, the traditional use of a colour by a particular party was not given up as an electioneering method. Thus the U.N.P. continued to use green as its party colour; the S.L.F.P. had used blue in 1952 and so the M.E.P. colour was blue and red since the V.L.S.S.P. colour was red. The Marxist parties—the L.S.S.P. and the C.P.—also used red. Party colours were used in a variety of ways. Many U.N.P. pamphlets were printed in green ink, while L.S.S.P. or C.P. pamphlets used red ink. U.N.P. meeting places were decorated with green flags while M.E.P. meetings displayed blue and red flags. U.N.P. processions were often led by green-shirted youths, while L.S.S.P. processions had a flow of red shirts. The M.E.P. leader wore a blue scarf round his neck to complete the national dress of white cloth and banian. The U.N.P. leader was often seen in a green bush coat.

From the point of view of the candidates, fighting an election is no easy task. In the absence of a well-developed party organisation in the country, functions normally performed by agents and organisers in Britain have to be performed by the candidates. In the preponderant majority of cases, the candidates themselves were their own election agents. Few candidates appointed persons other than themselves for the office. A good many candidates also had "Election Committees" to help them

organise. The members of such committees were more often than not, relations, supporters and sympathisers. Their personal relationship to the candidate was the dominant factor in their selection. Party candidates were advised by the party headquarters to organise as many election committees as possible in different parts of the constituency. The L.S.S.P. and the C.P. which were fairly well organised in several constituencies were able to use their peripheral organisations—such as youth leagues—for this purpose. Thus in Moratuwa the L.S.S.P. had at least 14 election committees. In Badulla and Kotte too the number of L.S.S.P. election committees was large. In the C.P. strongholds too the position was similar. Yet in those constituencies where their support was small, the election organisation was weak. The number of election committees which U.N.P. and M.E.P. candidates formed was often a function of their own personal and financial strength. Many of the serious Independent candidates also had election committees.

Election organisations in each constituency were called upon to perform many functions. They were expected to go from house to house checking the electoral registers, noting those who had died since registration, those who had left the constituency and those unable to go to vote. They were expected to distribute election cards from house to house. They undertook the distribution of election literature and the task of obtaining

permission from the owners of nearby lands to put up election sheds near polling booths. They had to see to the building of these sheds. They collected election literature distributed by the opposing side or sides.

The candidate and his election organisation also had to see to the arrangements for transporting voters to and from the polling booths. Owners of cars had to be approached and arrangements for their use on election day had to be made. The U.N.P. was in a more favourable position with regard to this. There was of course no way of limiting the use of a car flying one party's colours to supporters of that party. And often enough opposition candidates requested their supporters to go in cars flying the U.N.P. flag.⁵

Since the extent of impersonation at elections is regarded as very great, every candidate made arrangements to place his own polling agents at every polling booth. Their task was to challenge persons whom they suspected of not being the persons whose names were in the register. The earlier checking of electoral registers was to be put into use at this time. In almost all constituencies the polling agents were from the same constituency. Some candidates were however forced to seek some of their polling agents from outside the constituency.

All this required some sort of a central office for each candidate in each constituency. Practically all the candidates did have some central office. Party candidates used their party offices where they were available. Others used a part of the residence as an election office. Few candidates were without an election office. Most of the workers in these offices were voluntary, doing part-time work. Some candidates also had a few full-time workers—mostly relations, wives, sisters, brothers, etc. Very few candidates employed salaried officers for these tasks. In the case of the L.S.S.P. and C.P. some of their full-time salaried officers were put to full-time election work. Some of the more well-to-do candidates employed one or two salaried persons. It is more than likely that many of these salaried workers were not new employees but persons normally employed by the candidate and put to election work during the campaign.

In none of these features was there a difference among the parties. Some M.E.P. candidates had several salaried workers in addition to full-time and part-time voluntary workers. So did some U.N.P., L.S.S.P. and C.P. candidates. By and large the election organisation in each constituency for each candidate was manned by volunteers. Some candidates claimed to have over 100 volunteer workers. Some had as small a number as seven working at the central election office.

In Ceylon therefore, most of the labour and industry and the greater part of the financial burden of fighting an election have to be borne by the candidate. When it comes to actual electioneering the party becomes merely an ancillary organisation. One might even say that the candidate is the pivot of the party organisation in a constituency. This is one of the reasons why the individual candidate still continues to play a far more important role in Ceylon than say in the United Kingdom.

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CHAPTER X.

THE RESULT

The result of the general election was a surprise even to the victors. There was indeed a general feeling immediately prior to the polling that the U.N.P. would lose its clear majority in Parliament. It was held by many, however, that even if the U.N.P. were to lose many seats, any anti-U.N.P. majority would consist of a combination of M.E.P., L.S.S.P. and C.P. M.P.s. It was in the hope and belief that an M.E.P. government could be formed only with L.S.S.P. support, that the L.S.S.P. expressed its willingness to help Mr. Bandaranaike to form a Government. The results however proved otherwise. The M.E.P. was returned with an absolute majority.

PARTY	VOTES POLLED	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL VOTES	SEATS	PERCENT AGE OF SEATS
M.E.P.	1,092,211	40.7	51	53.6
U.N.P.	731,516	27.3	8	8.5
Independents	293,587	11.0	8	8.4
L.S.S.P.	274,204	10.2	14	14.7
F.P.	141,936	5.4	10	10.6
C.P.	119,715	4.5	3	3.2
L.P.	18,123	0.6	—	—
T.C.	8,914	0.3	1	1.0
TOTAL	2,680,206	100.0	95	100.0

The results province by province was as follows :-

PROV:	M.E.P.	U.N.P.	INDEP.	L.S.S.P.	F.P.	C.P.	L.P.	T.C.
Western	271054	250543	61099	177522	—	45296	17915	—
Central	162734	133148	8759	1931	—	—	208	—
Southern	253391	126110	33929	—	—	36352	—	—
Northern	—	—	58155	2703	93894	32783	—	8914
Eastern	—	—	61087	4242	48042	—	—	—
N.W.P.	133602	72981	59836	5273	—	5284	—	—
N.C.P.	44354	23245	610	4749	—	—	—	—
Uva	77769	31357	8784	27713	—	—	—	—
Sabara- gamuwa	149307	94132	1328	50071	—	—	—	—

In view of the fact that there was a great degree of opposition unity against the U.N.P. the result as between the Government (U.N.P.) and Opposition (i.e. M.E.P., L.S.S.P. and C.P.) is worth noting. In this case the voting in the Northern and Eastern provinces is excluded as the Government versus Opposition issue was fought only in the rest of the country.

Government vs Opposition

	VOTES	SEATS
U.N.P.	731,516	8
M.E.P., L.S.S.P. & C.P.	1,446,402	68

In the 1952 general election the U.N.P. won a majority of the votes in the Central Province, N.W.P., N.C.P., and Sabaragamuwa and 49.7% of the votes in Uva, all traditionally regarded as rural. The geographical distribution of U.N.P. votes in the 1956 general election is quite the reverse.

U.N.P. PERCENTAGE OF VOTES POLLED BY PROVINCE

	1952	1956
W.P.	42.0	30.4
C.P.	52.8	43.4
S.P.	38.7	28.0
N.P.	—	—
E.P.	—	—
N.W.P.	55.7	26.3
N.C.P.	53.5	31.8
Uva	49.7	21.6
Sabaragamuwa	59.1	31.9

Even though the U.N.P. failed to win a majority of votes in any province, its loss of popularity was most marked in the rural areas.

The percentage distribution of votes by province is given in the Table below :

	M.E.P.	U.N.P.	L.S.S.P.	C.P.	F.P.	T.C.	L.P.	INDEP*
W.P.	32.9	30.4	21.6	5.5	—	—	2.2	7.4
C.P.	53.0	43.4	.6	—	—	—	0.07	2.9
S.P.	56.4	28.0	—	8.1	—	—	—	7.5
N.P.	—	—	1.4	16.6	47.8	4.5	—	29.7
E.P.	—	—	3.7	—	42.4	—	—	53.9
N.W.P.	48.3	26.3	1.9	1.9	—	—	—	21.6
N.C.P.	60.8	31.8	6.5	—	—	—	—	.9
Uva	53.4	21.6	19.0	—	—	—	—	6.0
Sabara gamuwa	50.6	31.9	17.0	—	—	—	—	.5

In the Northern and Eastern provinces the issue was between the Federal Party and its opponents. The results were as follows. (Here the polling for Vavuniya and Muttur where the F.P. did not contest is ignored.)

	VOTES	SEATS
F.P.	141,936	10
Opposition	146,541	6

Since the Federal Party campaigned for a Federal constitution and it was suggested that the Northern and Eastern provinces should be a federal unit, the popularity of the F.P. in the two provinces is worth examining. The Federal Party polled 93,894 votes in the Northern province. Mr. Suntheralingam, who supported the Federal Party at that time, also polled 8,778 votes. The opponents of the Federal Party polled 104,701 votes. In the Eastern province the Federal Party polled 48,042 votes as against 65,329 votes of the non-F.P. candidates. Even these figures could be misleading as the two Muslim M.Ps, who won on the F.P. ticket, have since severed their party connections. Broadly speaking it can be said that the Federal Party is essentially a party deriving support from Tamils and with but little support even from the Muslims of the Eastern province. The general election of 1956 is evidence that the Federal appeal stops at Batticaloa in the Eastern province.

One of the most satisfactory features of the general election of 1956 was the high percentage of the turn-out of voters. In 1947 this percentage was 56.2; in 1952 it was 70.48 and in 1956 it was 69.1. For an Asian country governed by parliamentary institutions this is high indeed. The turn-out in Ceylon also compares favourably with that of the United Kingdom.

One of the major criticisms levelled at parliamentary institutions in Asian countries is that more often than is desirable, a candidate

is elected on a plurality of votes which is less than the absolute majority of votes cast. This was the case in Ceylon in 1947 and 1952. The reason of course is simple enough. In both these elections in a large number of single-member constituencies, more than two candidates contested and many M.P.s were elected on a plurality which was less than half the votes cast. In 1956 there was a significant change. Of the 89 constituencies, of which 84 were single-member constituencies, there were only 41 straight fights. Yet in 72 constituencies the winning candidates polled an absolute majority of the votes cast. It appears that as the number of winning candidates who poll an absolute majority of votes cast increases, the gap between the party representation in Parliament and the number of votes polled by the party widens. In 1952 in the single member constituencies only 59 winning candidates polled an absolute majority of the votes cast. In that election the maximum gap between the percentage of votes polled by a party and the percentage of its parliamentary representation was 13.1. In 1956 the maximum gap was 18.8. It is indeed ironical that as more winning candidates become more truly representative of their electorates, Parliament becomes less representative of the political opinion in the country.

It is interesting to notice the swing of the votes as between the various groups in the previous decade. This is not altogether possible because of the various "fronts"

that were formed from time to time. In 1952 the C.P. and the V.L.S.S.P. contested as a United Front; in 1956 the S.L.F.P. was the leading element but yet was only a part of the M.E.P. The F.P., L.S.S.P. and the U.N.P. however fought independently and their electoral success over the years can be easily examined.

	1947	1952	1956
U.N.P.	751,432	1,026,005	731,516
L.S.S.P.	317,213 (with B.S.P.)	305,133	274,204
F.P.	—	45,331	141,936
C.P.	70,331		119,715

The Federal Party trebled its vote between 1952 and 1956. The U.N.P. lost heavily in 1956 and could not maintain even its 1947 position. The L.S.S.P. appears to have lost its electoral strength progressively. Considering that the total number of persons who voted was greater in 1956 than in 1952, the loss in voting strength is even greater than the figures indicate. The Communist Party received 70,331 votes in 1947 and increased them to 119,715 in 1956. Its electoral strength in 1952 is difficult to assess because it was in alliance with the V.L.S.S.P.

Even assuming that all the votes the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. obtain are Marxist votes, as between 1947 and 1956 the Marxist parties have not been able to maintain their proportion of the total votes cast. In 1947,

together they received 387,544 votes and in 1956, 393,919 votes, the increase in votes not being commensurate with the increase in the voting strength. From this one might reach the conclusion that left-wing ideas were getting less popular in the country. It was left-wing politics as presented by the revolutionary Marxist parties that failed to win electoral support. Left-wing ideas in the form of parliamentary socialism were obtaining greater popularity. In this situation the traditional Marxist parties will have to become increasingly social democratic or face the risk of greater loss of electoral strength. In the alternative left-wing ideas nurtured in the Marxist fold will find their growth and maturity in social democratic form as evidenced by the M.E.P. The institutions of parliamentary democracy have been and will be of great influence in this regard. The more it appears unlikely that the traditional Marxist can come to power by parliamentary means, the more will this tendency be emphasised.

The question was posed early as to whether the results of the General Election of 1956 expressed merely an anti-U.N.P. feeling or whether they were a mandate for the M.E.P. to govern. Perhaps it is not quite correct to pose the question in this way. It is only on the people's wish to deny a further lease of power to the party in power that the desire for an alternative government could be predicated. There is no doubt about the clear decision of the people to

reject the U.N.P. in 1956. It was not however a desire to elect just anyone opposed to the U.N.P. The poor electoral success of the Independent is one indication of the people's desire to elect an alternative government. The declared willingness of the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. to support Mr. Bandaranaike helped the people in this choice. In those constituencies where the M.E.P. and the L.S.S.P. or C.P. clashed, the people, as a general rule, took care to vote heavily for the candidate who appeared to have the best chance of defeating the U.N.P. This was the case in Colombo North and Kiriella. Such a tendency was encouraged by the pattern of opposition electioneering. Mr. Bandaranaike, for instance, urged the voters to vote L.S.S.P. if they could not vote M.E.P. as at Wellawatte-Galkissa. The C.P. urged the people to vote M.E.P. if they did not wish to vote C.P. as at Kurunegala. These requests were made on the calculation of each candidate's chances of electoral success.

Nor did the electorate permit religious or caste considerations to impinge on their basic desire to elect an alternative government. In Wattagama they elected an M.E.P. Christian against a U.N.P. Buddhist. In Ambalangoda-Balapitiya they rejected a candidate who asked for votes purely on the caste ticket. Thus neither the religion nor the caste of an individual candidate was a sufficient cause for his election.

It is true that every party was anxious to avoid unnecessary caste or religious hurdles when they chose candidates. Thus in all cases barring a few exceptions, all parties nominated Buddhists for Buddhist majority constituencies. They made allowances for the caste composition of an electorate when candidates were nominated. Even so, caste and religion were only marginal factors in the people's mind.

Prior to nomination day, and in the subsequent election campaign, even the political parties could not assess the degree of importance of the party label in electoral success. The U.N.P. felt that the 'standing' of the candidate in his constituency was an important factor. They judged this standing in terms of the candidate's social status, interest in local good works, his wealth and economic independence and the social and public standing of the candidate's family in the constituency. The L.S.S.P. was anxious that either its candidate and his family or both were known in the constituency for public-spiritedness. The M.E.P. too was moved by a similar desire but circumstances forced it to place less emphasis on this aspect. There is no doubt therefore that the parties felt that the role of the candidate vis-a-vis the party was more important in Ceylon than say in the United Kingdom. This premise was clearly seen in their choice of candidates and in their campaign.

Political commentators also deplored the fact that the voters were influenced by extraneous

issues in their voting. The "Times of Ceylon" commentator wrote on the 9th of March that "the fact is of course that personality and social background still count with a considerable section of the electorate". A "Lankadipa" columnist wrote on the 21st of March that there were considerable sections of people whose votes were determined by the offer of money, a drink, and such like reasons. Another writer in the "Lankadipa" of the same day suggested that candidates have to introduce themselves by means of pamphlets etc., and state their individual claims for election only because they had done no public service.

In spite of making allowances for non-party factors in the election of M.P.s, however, the parties emphasised the need for returning party men. The U.N.P. argued that a stable government was possible only if the U.N.P. were returned. It criticised the M.E.P. with its no-contest agreements as being a hodge-podge with no agreed policy or party discipline. It emphasised the need for an agreed policy as the foundation of good government. The L.S.S.P. and the C.P. also fought not merely on an anti-U.N.P. slogan but on their party record as well. The M.E.P., though not a party in the traditional sense of the term, had an acknowledged leader and a common programme. The emphasis on "party" in the campaign fell in with the people's judgement of politics. Many Independents realised this in the

later part of the campaign and hastened to offer their support to Mr. Bandaranaike if they were elected.

Making allowances for all factors the results indicate that the election was essentially a party fight. Of the 8 Independents elected in 1956, 4 were from the Northern and Eastern provinces. Mr. Hugh Fernando of Nattandiya was known to be an M.E.P. sympathiser. Mr. R. G. Senanayake was a national figure fighting the U.N.P. as an Independent in 2 seats. And apart from Mr. Ismail who won as an Independent at Puttalam, none of the other Independents were successful. Large numbers of them lost their deposits. This at least was one indication of the temper of the electorate.

Nor were the careful considerations that went in to the choice of U.N.P. nominees of much help in preventing the defeat of the U.N.P. Education, wealth, social status, public works, family background were of no avail. A comparatively unknown young man fighting on the M.E.P. ticket defeated the former S.L.F.P. stalwart who crossed over to the U.N.P. at Matale. Buddhist priests campaigned against a Buddhist leader in Wattegama in favour of a Christian M.E.P. candidate. It seems correct to say therefore that the party was the determining factor in the general election of 1956 although other considerations may have been marginal factors. None of the latter were decisive.

The electorate also displayed a surprising maturity. The way they intuitively as it were, sifted the likely Opposition winner from among a number of Opposition candidates in certain constituencies is remarkable. How they indicated their political inclinations to the Independents even before polling is of great interest. The way they eschewed sectarian considerations in voting for a party speaks of a mature judgement.

Why did the U.N.P. lose the 1956 election? There is of course the very simple answer that the people did not vote for it in sufficient numbers. And without an opinion survey it is not possible to give definite reasons, as to why sufficient numbers did not vote U.N.P. Even so from the indirect route of how the parties and candidates reacted to the general sense of the people some broad assessment may be made.

If the degree of concentration on an issue in the campaign were an indication of its popular interest, then from the economic point of view, the economic burdens, which in 1953 the U.N.P. placed on the people least able to bear them were a major cause of its defeat. If these burdens were placed on them as a temporary prelude to further economic development, there might have been some justification for them. The U.N.P. however pleaded financial difficulties and not the demands of an economic plan for further development. It did not place additional equally heavy burdens on the well-to-do section of the people and so its actions

appeared as the soulless decisions of a privileged circle protecting the interests of the privileged at the expense of the common man. The U.N.P. failed to convince the people that it took the problem of economic development seriously enough, and more than anything else it neither made a dramatic gesture nor espoused a bold policy in that direction.

The U.N.P. also made itself unpopular with its anti-opium campaign at a critical moment. No one criticised the Government's decision to stop the illicit cultivation of opium in the South. Liberal-minded people, however, protested strongly against the use of the armed forces for a civil action and the uncouth manner in which the army set about the task. Although the Government took action, though after some delay, to investigate the affair, great damage was done to the U.N.P. by this incident. The U.N.P. had also alienated many liberal elements in the country by what appeared to be scant respect for civil liberties in Government actions. A general sense of insecurity had pervaded the liberal element in the country under Sir John Kotelawala's regime.

Neither the economic disaffection of the common man nor the political disaffection of the "liberals" are sufficient reasons for the defeat of the U.N.P. The language movement and the religious revival of the Buddhists were equally important, if not more important, factors. It has been argued that since both the U.N.P. and the M.E.P.

stood for Sinhala Only, the Sinhala Only issue could not have been a factor in the U.N.P. defeat. It is also argued that since in some constituencies parity-supporting L.S.S.P. candidates defeated Sinhala Only U.N.P. candidates, the language issue was not decisive. Such a conclusion would be incorrect for many reasons. It assumes that the voter's choice is governed by one factor if that factor were sufficiently important. There is no evidence that that is the case in any parliamentary election. Such a conclusion also assumes that the voter can be led purely by party declarations. The voters proved that this was not the case. Besides, all the Opposition groups including the L.S.S.P. spent much time and effort to convince the people that the *bona fides* of the U.N.P. on the language issue was suspect. They argued that U.N.P. promises were not kept and mentioned the price of rice as a case in point. They argued that the U.N.P.'s language somersault was an election tactic. So while the language issue dominated people's mind they went beyond the party declarations to an assessment of their *bona fides*. This was the case with the Buddhist issue as well. The language and religious issues were not merely a test of measures but of men as well. And the emphasis shifted to the latter during the later part of the campaign.

It may appear surprising that the U.N.P. of all parties failed to meet the language and religious demands of the preponderant majority of the people. The reasons are

however not far to seek. U.N.P. governments since 1947 had been right of centre governments. They were not 'reactionary' governments. It is true that they had been cautious and slow in meeting the demands from the under-privileged but they never ignored them. The gap between the U.N.P. Government and the common people however appeared to widen during Sir John's premiership. The reason was that although the U.N.P. did not change its attitude or policies, the cultural and religious movements gathered greater momentum. The English-educated upper middle-class atmosphere which surrounded those who counselled the U.N.P., denied them the opportunity of assessing the strength of these movements. One U.N.P. Minister, for instance, had once declared that vernacular teachers could manage with lower salaries as they did not have to consume cheese and butter like the English-medium teachers. This was the kind of mental iron curtain through which popular movements failed to reach the U.N.P. The U.N.P. under-estimated the strength of the Buddhist demands and failed to keep the support of the active Buddhist clergy. It failed to assess the economic forces behind the language movement and the cultural revival. It involved itself in incidents which hurt the religious and cultural susceptibilities of the majority of the people. It antagonised the Ayurvedic doctors by reason of its White Paper on Ayurveda. It antagonised the vernacular teachers by failing

to remove the discriminatory scales of pay fixed purely on the basis of language. In short it antagonised the vernacular educated middle-class who were in the forefront of the cultural and religious revival.

The religious revival and the language movement were specific issues in meeting which the U.N.P. lost public faith and trust. They were however not merely specific issues. They were the reflection of a growing national movement in the country. Like many western observers, the U.N.P. failed to realise that the Independence movement was only the precursor to the national movement and not the national movement itself. The latter began where the former left off. One major cause of the U.N.P. defeat can be attributed to its inability and failure to give leadership to this movement.

The U.N.P. made tactical errors from the beginning. The U.N.P. decided on an early dissolution but failed to keep it a secret. In this it allowed the Opposition to organise itself and also failed to dramatise the issue on which it was to go to the polls. In fact it allowed itself to be put on the defensive by the S.L.F.P. offer to help it pass a Sinhala Only Act and by the E.B.P. demand not to hold the elections before Buddha Jayanti.

It hoped to make some party capital out of American aid. By this it only aroused the fears of American interference which the Opposition had been fostering for years past. It sought the aid of certain sections

of the press to headline its proposed schemes. It only earned this section of the press a degree of unpopularity which it had not experienced before. Sir John sought to impress the people that he was likely to form the next government and in the process of doing so gave further strength to the Opposition allegation that he was fascist minded.

Above all there was a new factor which the U.N.P. had never faced before. The M.E.P. with the no-contest agreements, provided an alternative government. Previously the issue was between the U.N.P. and its opponents. In 1956 the issue was between the U.N.P. and the Opposition. This was of great psychological importance. Electorally too this was a great blow to the U.N.P. In 1952 the U.N.P. won a number of seats because the Opposition groups split the anti-U.N.P. majority among themselves. In 1952 in Kalutara, Colombo North and Kiriella a combination of S.L.F.P. and L.S.S.P. votes would have won these seats for the Opposition. In Chilaw a combination of S.L.F.P. and Republican Party votes would have had the same result. In Horowopotana, a combination of L.S.S.P., S.L.F.P. and Republican Party votes would have lost the seat for the U.N.P. In 1956 there were hardly any such cases except at Hakmana and Horowopotana. More importantly the election was for all practical purposes a straight fight between the U.N.P. and the Opposition in all barring a few constituencies.

The general election of 1956 was not merely a fight between the U.N.P. and an alternative government. It was a fight between the U.N.P. and an acceptable alternative government. In 1947 and 1952 the fight was between the U.N.P. and a number of opposition groups, the most effective of which were revolutionary Marxist parties. Now in both these elections the U.N.P. succeeded in holding the rural votes, whose importance in parliamentary elections has been mentioned before. It kept the rural vote away from the S.L.F.P. in 1952 because in that year the U.N.P. had not placed any obvious economic burdens on the common man, and the religious and language issues had not reached major levels of importance. The U.N.P. also kept the rural vote away from the Marxists by means of two major arguments. They alleged that the Marxists would destroy religion. All the efforts of the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. failed to convince the people of the contrary. The U.N.P. also played on the Indian problem to the detriment of the Marxist parties. The L.S.S.P. and the C.P. had taken up positions which indicated that they would allow larger numbers of Indians to obtain citizenship rights in Ceylon. In 1952 the seeds of the national movement were in the desire to protect the nation against Indians and religion against Marxism. In 1952, unconsciously perhaps, the U.N.P. gave leadership to this movement.

The Marxist parties also then, as now, had not made much headway in the rural areas. The cadres of both parties then, as now, came largely from the English-educated middle classes. Although they made much effort to build trade unions among the manual grade industrial workers and clerical workers, they failed to make any impact on the rural economy. Their negative relationship with rural society and the positive campaign of the U.N.P. kept the rural vote away from them.

The M.E.P. of 1956 was of an entirely different order. It believed in political democracy and economic socialism. It understood and supported the religious and cultural revival. It combined therefore liberalism, socialism and nationalism. The powerful arguments used by the U.N.P. against the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. could not be used effectively against the M.E.P. In fact the E.B.P. asked for support for the M.E.P. to save Buddhism from the U.N.P. Mr. Bandaranaike's Indian policy appeared to make less concessions to Indians than that of the U.N.P. under the Nehru-Kotelawala Agreement. On the other hand, the M.E.P.'s cultural orientation was more acceptable to the common man. The M.E.P. was not merely an alternative government but also an acceptable one within the terms of parliamentary democracy. It was radical without being revolutionary. It was democratic while seeking socialism. It was able to supply the alternative that had been lacking in the

political scene. Thus it attracted the rural impoverished as well as the urban liberals.

Even so the U.N.P. defeat was not as heavy as the number of its M.P.s indicated. It received half as many votes as the entire former Opposition i.e., the M.E.P., the L.S.S.P. and the C.P. put together. It received three times as many votes as the L.S.S.P. It received twice as many votes as the L.S.S.P. and C.P. combined. Except in Uva it received over a quarter of the votes polled in every province it contested, and received as much as 30 per cent of the votes cast in the most urbanised Western province. It has therefore much dependable strength in both urban and rural areas.

The opinion in the country prior to the dissolution was that the two Marxist parties, the C.P. and the L.S.S.P., would not fare too well because of their language policy. This was conceded even by the L.S.S.P. leader when he agreed to a reconsideration of the no-contest agreement with the S.L.F.P. when the obvious intention of that reconsideration was to increase the number of seats allocated to the M.E.P. The no-contest agreement however was vital to the Marxist parties as well as to the defeat of the U.N.P. The no-contest agreement and the subsequent offer of the C.P. and the L.S.S.P. to help Mr. Bandaranaike to form a Government were of both electoral and psychological importance. They gave rise to the feeling that the U.N.P. could be defeated.

They were also more important to the L.S.S.P. than is generally realised. It is of course difficult to assess exactly how many of the L.S.S.P.'s votes came to it for its own record and how many because it offered to help the formation of a Bandaranaike government. It is also true that many L.S.S.P. votes went to M.E.P. candidates where the L.S.S.P. did not contest and *vice versa*. However, the L.S.S.P. emphasised its intention to support Mr. Bandaranaike in the latter part of the campaign, and the M.E.P. urged voters to return L.S.S.P. candidates to form a Bandaranaike government. It is not wrong therefore to assume that the L.S.S.P. votes might have been less had it not offered to help the formation of a government under Mr. Bandaranaike.

It has been argued that the L.S.S.P. votes were a vindication of the L.S.S.P. position on the language issue. If this were true, it is a poor vindication in that the L.S.S.P. received 274,204 votes as compared with 1,823,727 votes cast for the Sinhala Only parties. It is more likely that these votes came to it not because of its language position but in spite of it. It must also be remembered that the L.S.S.P. was rather equivocal on the language issue during the important phase of the campaign, especially after nomination day. Its Manifesto did not offer a concrete programme on any aspect of policy, but was more in the nature of a Grand Remonstrance. The L.S.S.P. did not seek a mandate on its parity policy especially

because it did not mention it in its party manifesto. It did not, unlike in 1952, seek a mandate to govern. It was in fact an autonomous and peripheral wing of the anti-U.N.P. forces led by the M.E.P. The L.S.S.P. vote was in considerable measure a vindication of the anti-U.N.P. feeling rather than a pro-parity mandate. On the other hand, it is difficult to say whether the C.P. gained anything electorally from its association with the M.E.P. It won a seat in the North and two in its stronghold in the South. It lost Matara to an ex-Communist who contested on the M.E.P. ticket. So that one might say that the anti-U.N.P. forces on the one hand and the L.S.S.P. on the other were the prime beneficiaries of Opposition unity, although it is arguable that an M.E.P. victory would have been less likely without it.

In the Northern and Eastern provinces the Federal Party was the victor. It would be incorrect to assume from this that the people of these two provinces gave a mandate for federalism. As a matter of fact there was a plurality of anti-federal votes in both provinces. There is no doubt that a good many of those who voted for the Federal Party accepted the policy of federalism. To ignore this fact would be a mistake. An assessment of the campaign seems to indicate, however, that the votes for the F.P. were more a vote of no-confidence in the former representatives of the Tamil people. The Federal Party made a virtue out of its non-cooperation with

the U.N.P. The latter was discredited among the Tamils after its change of policy on the language issue. That discredit percolated to the former Tamil representatives through their association with the U.N.P. The fact that the Federal Party was a disciplined party as opposed to a host of Independents also helped its victory, but this should not be over-emphasised. The victory of the Federal Party expressed in no uncertain terms the Tamil fears and suspicions of Sinhalese intentions. It was also an expression of faith in the men of the Federal Party even more than in its policy and programme. Throughout the entire country therefore the general election was both a test of men as well as of measures.

THE SWING—BY CONSTITUENCIES

Statistical Tables

Constituency	Year	Government		Opposition		Independents and Others			% Swing
		Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled		
1. Colombo North ..	1952	10,630	47.79	10,728	48.23	710	3.19		
	1956	9,489	32.68	18,070	62.23	1,305	4.49		-14.55
2. Colombo Central ..	1952	45,490	37.04	46,902	38.19	26,179	21.32		
	1956	65,094	42.84	65,671	43.22	17,269	11.37		+ 0.38
3. Colombo South ..	1952	10,913	58.75	7,548	40.63	—	—		
	1956	9,155	37.51	14,789	60.59	—	—		-20.09
4. Wellawatta-Galkissa	1952	16,388	57.00	11,888	41.35	228	0.79		
	1956	11,806	30.29	27,041	69.38	—	—		-27.37
5. Ja-Ela ..	1952	18,212	57.46	12,098	38.17	1,025	3.23		
	1956	19,132	43.17	24,381	55.01	596	1.34		-15.56
6. Negombo ..	1952	22,721	57.42	12,603	31.85	3,855	9.74		
	1956	18,212	41.41	20,892	47.51	4,589	10.44		-15.83
7. Mirigama ..	1952	27,447	60.65	17,502	38.67	—	—		
	1956	10,896	22.66	36,193	75.28	774	1.61		-37.30
8. Gampaha ..	1952	18,546	46.86	19,892	50.26	735	1.86		
	1956	5,096	12.42	34,898	85.07	772	1.88		-35.62
9. Attanagalla ..	1952	5,934	13.25	38,478	85.94	—	—		
	1956	3,019	6.15	45,016	91.82	621	1.27		- 6.49
10. Kelaniya ..	1952	22,103	50.30	20,725	47.19	673	1.53		
	1956	14,187	27.24	—	—	37,558	72.13		
11. Avissawella ..	1952	18,485	48.31	19,414	50.74	—	—		
	1956	7,818	20.36	30,070	78.32	258	0.67		-27.76

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12. Kotte ..	1952	11,051	36.97	15,865	53.08	2,807	9.39		
	1956	10,244	28.46	25,050	69.61	551	0.15		-12.52
13. Horana ..	1952	21,746	51.15	20,761	48.84	—	—		
	1956	19,125	38.85	29,780	60.50	—	—		-11.98
14. Moratuwa ..	1952	12,741	32.20	26,408	66.74	—	—		
	1956	11,811	29.14	19,529	48.19	8,992	22.19		+ 7.74
15. Panadura ..	1952	19,760	51.53	17,104	44.60	1,089	2.84		
	1956	11,032	27.17	29,362	72.32	—	—		-26.04
16. Kalutara ..	1952	11,665	33.49	21,247	61.00	1,530	4.39		
	1956	10,551	27.03	28,195	72.24	—	—		- 8.35
17. Matugama ..	1952	15,666	45.80	18,168	53.11	—	—		
	1956	6,189	17.09	25,798	71.25	4,209	11.63		-23.42
18. Agalawatta ..	1952	13,659	49.12	10,107	36.35	3,680	13.23		
	1956	7,487	25.48	20,208	68.75	1,419	4.83		-27.54
19. Dambulla ..	1952	2,897	18.87	8,294	54.02	3,851	25.08		
	1956	5,553	26.95	14,688	71.28	—	—		-12.67
20. Matale ..	1952	8,896	41.49	12,316	57.44	—	—		
	1956	10,372	44.10	12,968	55.14	—	—		+ 2.45
21. Minipe ..	1952	10,696	68.48	4,572	29.27	—	—		
	1956	6,445	36.28	11,093	62.45	—	—		-32.69
22. Wattigama ..	1952	14,264	62.55	2,903	12.73	5,381	23.60		
	1956	11,109	42.53	14,657	56.12	—	—		-30.65
23. Kadugannawa ..	1952	50,288	55.41	35,576	39.20	1,074	1.18		
	1956	52,278	51.05	42,982	41.97	7,140	6.97		- 3.06
24. Kandy ..	1952	11,349	58.44	7,644	39.36	277	1.42		
	1956	9,766	46.84	11,005	52.78	—	—		-12.01

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THE SWING—BY CONSTITUENCIES—Contd.

Constituency	Year	Government		Opposition		Independents and Others			% Swing
		Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled		
25. Galaha	1952	10,962	47.69	4,725	20.55	6,952	30.24		-29.66
	1956	10,490	37.81	16,924	61.00	—	—		
26. Gampola	1952	7,950	43.18	7,926	43.05	2,352	12.77		-23.72
	1956	4,302	23.02	13,143	70.33	1,067	5.71		
27. Maturata	1952	15,333	83.32	941	5.11	1,809	9.83		-35.23
	1956	9,523	51.22	8,083	43.48	760	4.09		
28. Nuwara Eliya	1952	3,852	64.09	392	6.52	1,691	28.13		-39.57
	1956	3,008	38.78	4,681	60.36	—	—		
29. Talawakele	1952	1,198	54.11	979	44.21	—	—		-2.53
	1956	1,720	52.01	1,560	47.17	—	—		
30. Kotigala	1952	2,711	47.85	741	13.08	2,151	37.96		-28.57
	1956	2,607	38.30	4,130	60.68	—	—		
31. Nawalapitiya	1952	4,955	74.18	709	10.61	965	14.44		-43.48
	1956	2,961	37.99	4,785	61.39	—	—		
32. Maskeliya	1952	4,252	73.92	1,068	18.56	360	6.25		-34.45
	1956	3,014	42.86	3,966	56.40	—	—		
33. Ambalangoda-Balapitiya	1952	37,901	29.13	52,316	40.21	36,937	28.39		-20.06
	1956	22,959	17.71	89,390	68.97	14,557	11.23		
34. Baddegama	1952	11,572	37.05	16,182	51.82	3,230	10.34		-4.17
	1956	11,082	33.04	18,834	56.16	3,397	10.13		
35. Udugama	1952	6,160	23.62	19,627	75.27	—	—		+ 8.25
	1956	1,737	5.71	12,411	40.86	15,975	52.60		
36. Galle	1952	13,355	42.46	17,897	56.90	—	—		-9.14
	1956	11,015	33.17	21,971	66.16	—	—		
37. Weligama	1952	16,397	53.78	—	—	13,806	42.28		-11.91
	1956	13,659	41.95	18,648	57.27	—	—		
38. Akuressa	1952	15,625	47.85	16,626	50.92	—	—		-7.17
	1956	14,639	40.93	20,867	58.35	—	—		
39. Matara	1952	10,785	38.55	14,126	50.50	2,565	9.17		-14.81
	1956	7,342	24.08	22,913	75.15	—	—		
40. Hakmana	1952	15,762	49.83	15,582	49.26	—	—		-11.38
	1956	13,208	38.41	20,841	60.61	—	—		
41. Deniyaya	1952	13,808	59.52	—	—	9,174	39.54		-20.40
	1956	10,710	39.43	16,170	59.54	—	—		
42. Beliatta	1952	13,750	43.73	17,382	55.29	—	—		-15.70
	1956	10,382	28.17	26,215	71.14	—	—		
43. Hambantota	1952	14,294	54.42	11,076	42.16	566	2.15		-25.05
	1956	9,337	30.72	20,931	68.57	—	—		
44. Kayts	1952	9,517	43.04	(Fed) 1,420	6.42	10,973	49.63		
	1956	—	—	16,308	70.60	6,599	28.57		
45. Vaddukkodai	1952	5,261	22.16	6,794	28.62	11,187	47.12		
	1956	—	—	25,787	98.62	—	—		
46. Kankasanturai	1952	15,337	56.25	(Fed) 11,571	42.44	—	—		
	1956	—	—	19,168	69.26	8,188	29.58		
47. Jaffna	1952	12,726	60.22	8,317	39.35	—	—		
	1956	—	—	22,029	99.32	—	—		

THE SWING—BY CONSTITUENCIES—Contd.

Constituency	Year	Government		Opposition		Independents & Others			% Swing
		Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled	% Polled	
48. Kopy	1952	9,200	43.30	11,764	55.36	—	—	—	—
	1956	—	—	12,084	51.70	10,983	46.99	—	—
49. Point Pedro	1952	11,609	40.82	10,824	38.06	5,512	19.38	—	—
	1956	—	—	20,240	70.71	8,064	28.17	—	—
50. Chavakachcheri	1952	14,801	71.73	5,663	27.44	—	—	—	—
	1956	—	—	15,952	64.23	8,677	34.93	—	—
51. Mannar	1952	Independent	—	—	—	11,166	98.99	—	—
	1956	—	—	6,726	52.68	5,935	46.49	—	—
52. Vavuniya	1952	1,398	15.34	—	—	7,609	83.51	—	—
	1956	—	—	—	—	8,709	99.21	—	—
53. Trincomalee	1952	3,864	39.34	4,450	45.31	1,403	14.28	—	—
	1956	—	—	7,048	56.61	5,343	42.92	—	—
54. Muttur	1952	3,329	35.04	—	—	6,050	63.69	—	—
	1956	—	—	—	—	12,451	99.09	—	—
55. Kalkudah	1952	7,599	52.51	—	—	6,724	46.46	—	—
	1956	—	—	4,555	28.02	11,532	70.95	—	—
6. Batticaloa	1952	7,960	40.52	—	—	11,420	58.14	—	—
	1956	—	—	9,300	51.22	8,568	47.19	—	—
57. Paddirippu	1952	7,198	37.01	—	—	12,052	61.97	—	—
	1956	—	—	9,422	49.14	9,528	49.69	—	—
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58. Kalmunai	1952	8,744	25.88	—	—	10,492	72.53	—	—
	1956	—	—	13,706	68.58	6,095	30.50	—	—
59. Pottuvil	1952	8,093	51.20	—	—	7,534	47.67	—	—
	1956	—	—	8,353	51.80	7,570	46.95	—	—
60. Puttalam	1952	9,117	77.59	—	—	2,529	21.52	—	—
	1956	—	—	5,273	44.15	6,524	54.63	—	—
61. Nikaveratiya	1952	11,999	62.73	6,999	36.59	—	—	—	—
	1956	7,829	31.73	15,914	64.50	781	3.17	—	—29.45
62. Dodangaslanda	1952	21,934	76.70	6,466	22.61	—	—	—	—
	1956	20,286	62.40	12,012	36.95	—	—	—	—14.32
63. Kurunegala	1952	18,049	56.84	13,518	42.57	—	—	—	—
	1956	10,239	29.85	2,382	69.64	—	—	—	—27.03
64. Dambadeniya	1952	22,003	74.65	7,257	24.62	—	—	—	—
	1956	1,507	5.35	—	—	26,414	93.90	—	—69.29
65. Wariyapola	1952	19,622	71.98	7,090	26.00	350	1.28	—	—
	1956	12,458	37.97	19,470	59.35	—	—	—	—33.68
66. Dandamuwa	1952	—	—	896	3.58	23,954	95.83	—	—
	1956	8,537	28.06	21,704	71.35	—	—	—	—
67. Bingiriya	1952	13,894	44.23	16,426	52.30	689	2.19	—	—
	1956	7,294	21.56	26,246	77.61	—	—	—	—24.02
68. Chilaw	1952	10,260	39.37	10,547	40.48	5,027	19.29	—	—
	1956	11,831	37.40	19,658	62.14	—	—	—	—11.81
69. Nattandiya	1952	—	—	—	—	28,880	99.28	—	—
	1956	—	—	—	—	32,117	99.49	—	—
70. Medawachchiya	1952	8,112	78.87	2,039	19.82	—	—	—	—
	1956	1,269	10.41	10,829	88.88	—	—	—	—68.76

THE SWING—BY CONSTITUENCIES—Contd.

Constituency	Year	Government		Opposition		Independents & Others		% Swing
		Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled	
71. Anuradhapura ..	1952	6,280	65.23	3,216	33.40	—	—	—24.85
	1956	5,272	40.17	7,618	58.05	131	0.99	—
72. Kalawewa ..	1952	5,674	42.71	2,894	21.78	4,470	33.65	—26.16
	1956	6,449	33.91	12,418	65.31	—	—	—
73. Horowupotana ..	1952	4,766	47.74	5,008	50.17	—	—	—5.07
	1956	6,307	43.14	8,146	55.72	—	—	—
74. Polonnaruwa ..	1952	2,856	33.36	5,627	65.74	—	—	—
	1956	3,948	26.90	10,072	68.64	479	3.26	—4.68
75. Alutnuwara ..	1952	3,595	50.92	1,443	20.43	1,814	25.69	—29.95
	1956	2,891	34.73	5,339	64.14	—	—	—
76. Badulla ..	1952	18,606	46.80	15,090	37.95	4,186	10.53	—9.84
	1956	16,025	35.52	20,908	46.35	6,736	14.93	—
77. Bandarawela ..	1952	6,392	61.84	3,775	36.52	—	—	—
	1956	2,662	24.61	6,805	62.92	1,278	11.82	—31.81
78. Welimada ..	1952	5,118	32.97	3,754	24.18	6,314	40.69	—27.14
	1956	4,318	24.49	12,336	69.98	770	4.37	—
79. Haputale ..	1952	2,444	49.29	1,168	23.55	1,346	27.15	—40.59
	1956	1,326	21.93	4,678	77.38	—	—	—
80. Buttala ..	1952	8,396	70.40	930	7.79	2,301	19.29	—45.36
	1956	4,135	35.44	7,416	63.56	—	—	—
81. Mawanella ..	1952	10,847	41.52	14,225	54.45	739	2.83	—4.94
	1956	12,564	37.88	20,125	60.69	200	0.60	—

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82. Kegalle ..	1952	16,443	64.35	407	1.59	8,358	32.71	—52.33
	1956	8,830	28.62	21,754	70.52	—	—	—
83. Dedigama ..	1952	21,206	75.12	6,783	24.03	—	—	—
	1956	6,360	21.53	22,816	77.26	191	0.65	—53.91
84. Ruwanwella ..	1952	9,558	46.68	10,601	51.77	—	—	—
	1956	7,855	35.51	14,083	63.67	—	—	—11.53
85. Dehiowita ..	1952	8,748	51.49	8,848	46.73	—	—	—
	1956	9,311	35.44	14,954	63.77	—	—	—16.54
86. Kiririella ..	1952	9,978	39.96	14,738	59.02	—	—	—
	1956	6,309	26.53	17,283	72.68	—	—	—13.54
87. Ratnapura ..	1952	11,191	53.87	9,380	45.11	—	—	—
	1956	6,286	26.72	16,644	70.75	405	1.72	—26.39
88. Nivitigala ..	1952	12,785	57.43	9,257	41.58	—	—	—
	1956	8,220	33.48	16,205	66.00	—	—	—24.67
89. Balangoda ..	1952	52,933	69.12	19,977	26.08	—	—	—
	1956	29,632	33.14	56,614	63.32	532	0.60	—36.61

Key : 1952 Government — U.N.P., T.C., and L.P.

1956 Government — U.N.P.

1952 Opposition — S.L.F.P., L.S.S.P., C.P., V.L.S.S.P., F.P.

1956 Opposition — M.E.P., L.S.S.P., C.P., F.P.

The percentage swing is here calculated as the average of the Opposition % gain or loss and the Government % gain or loss of the poll between 1952 and 1956. Thus in Colombo North the % gain of the Opposition was 14.00 ; the % loss of the Government was 15.11 ; the % swing was therefore 14.55, the minus sign indicating that it was against the Government.

THE SWING—BY PROVINCES

Province	Year	Government		Opposition		Independents and Others		% of Swing
		Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled	Votes	% Polled	
1. Western Province	1952	323,157	44.72	347,438	48.08	42,511	5.88	— 13.02
	1956	250,343	30.08	4,94,943	59.48	78,913	9.48	
2. Central	1952	149,603	55.10	88,786	32.70	26,863	9.89	— 16.30
	1956	133,148	43.10	164,665	53.30	8,967	2.90	
3. Southern	1952	169,409	40.10	180,811	42.80	66,278	15.68	— 16.60
	1956	126,070	27.74	289,191	68.64	33,929	7.47	
4. Northern	1952	79,849	43.17	56,353	30.47	46,447	25.11	—
	1956	—	—	138,294	70.03	57,155	28.94	
5. Eastern	1952	41,787	40.51	4,450	4.31	55,675	53.98	—
	1956	—	—	52,384	45.67	61,087	52.26	
6. North-Western	1952	126,878	48.89	69,199	26.67	61,429	23.67	— 19.40
	1956	79,981	27.35	122,659	41.95	65,836	22.51	
7. North Central	1952	27,668	53.52	18,784	36.31	4,470	8.64	— 26.15
	1956	23,245	31.58	49,083	66.68	610	0.83	
8. Uva	1952	44,551	49.75	26,160	29.21	15,961	17.82	— 23.38
	1956	31,357	31.49	57,482	57.72	8,784	8.82	
9. Sabaragamuwa	1952	154,689	58.62	94,216	35.70	9,097	3.45	— 29.12
	1956	94,367	31.42	200,478	66.75	1,328	0.44	

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THE NON-VOTERS

Constituency	Percentage Polled			% Increase in Poll between 1952 and 1956
	1947	1952	1956	
1. Colombo North	48.4	62.6	66.92	30.55
2. Colombo Central	64.3	70.1	72.32	23.73
3. Colombo South	56.8	56.4	61.06	31.39
4. Wellawatta-Galkissa	55.5	66.4	69.38	35.55
5. Ja-ela	44.1	57.2	71.93	39.82
6. Negombo	49.6	65.3	65.28	11.12
7. Mirigama	68.3	79.8	75.55	6.24
8. Gampaha	56.8	68.9	62.59	3.64
9. Attanagalla	48.0	76.6	75.94	9.49
10. Kelaniya	58.8	75.5	77.06	18.51
11. Avissawella	47.5	72.9	64.80	0.35
12. Kotte	47.1	62.9	63.23	20.39
13. Horana	68.1	78.8	81.09	15.78
14. Moratuwa	49.2	71.8	67.24	2.40
15. Panadura	70.8	67.8	65.19	5.88
16. Kalutara	57.9	67.9	67.48	12.04
17. Matugama	80.8	74.0	69.05	5.85
18. Agalawatta	41.2	77.0	75.09	5.65
19. Dambulla	45.0	50.8	55.17	34.21
20. Matale	63.1	73.2	71.08	9.67
21. Minipe	63.1	68.1	65.16	13.74
22. Wattagama	55.4	71.6	72.73	14.54
23. Kadugannawa	63.9	66.3	65.77	12.84
24. Kandy	57.7	70.1	63.77	7.36
25. Galaha	73.1	70.1	78.51	20.69
26. Gampola	64.2	71.9	62.19	1.50
27. Maturata	64.8	68.8	59.76	1.02
28. Nuwara -Eliya	60.2	64.8	65.59	29.03
29. Talawakele	70.1	76.0	80.73	49.36
30. Kotagala	72.3	73.1	76.57	20.14
31. Nawalapitiya	70.9	66.2	74.54	16.69
32. Maskeliya	61.7	66.1	77.74	22.23
33. Ambalangoda—Bala-pitiya	49.7	70.39	64.58	— 0.39
34. Baddegama	55.2	79.1	73.95	7.39
35. Udugama	51.2	68.2	94.54	16.48
36. Galle	63.5	71.9	62.78	5.58
37. Weligama	51.1	74.9	72.89	6.78
38. Akuressa	47.0	75.52	69.53	9.5
39. Matara	52.3	67.98	65.74	8.9
40. Hakmana	57.0	75.16	72.52	8.7
41. Deniyaya	49.7	70.6	69.92	17.0
42. Beliatta	62.4	75.6	74.66	17.2
43. Harabantota	58.6	70.8	69.17	16.2
44. Kayts	55.6	73.4	71.26	4.4

Constituency	Percentage Polled		% Increase in Poll bet ween 1952 and 1956	
	1947	1952	1956	
45. Vaddukoddai ..	52.0	69.5	72.81	10.15
46. Kankasanturai ..	57.7	70.9	67.55	1.50
47. Jaffna ..	46.2	71.7	63.72	4.95
48. Kopay ..	50.6	64.6	67.83	9.99
49. Point Pedro ..	58.0	65.8	64.18	0.64
50. Chavakachcheri ..	49.3	67.2	69.02	20.37
51. Mannar ..	67.6	75.4	80.70	13.18
52. Vavuniya ..	55.7	69.6	54.53	-3.79
53. Trincomalee ..	51.7	68.8	77.48	26.77
54. Muttur ..	48.9	56.9	56.20	32.29
55. Kalkudah ..	55.8	64.9	61.07	12.31
56. Batticaloa ..	50.0	78.7	60.64	-8.17
57. Paddiruppu ..	68.5	83.0	74.29	-1.44
58. Kalmunai ..	60.9	65.4	71.75	38.16
59. Pottuvil ..	72.8	74.6	68.44	2.02
60. Puttalam ..	—	77.1	68.72	1.63
61. Nikaweratiya ..	47.6	54.7	57.50	28.99
62. Dodangaslanda ..	57.8	76.8	70.29	13.68
63. Kurunegala ..	54.8	76.8	70.37	8.00
64. Dambadeniya ..	46.0	75.1	63.71	-4.79
65. Wariyapola ..	47.5	76.1	76.77	20.33
66. Dandagamuwa ..	53.3	70.2	74.21	21.69
67. Bingiriya ..	27.5	78.4	70.13	7.67
68. Chilaw ..	57.7	72.5	77.30	21.41
69. Nattandiya ..	59.7	81.0	81.10	10.97
70. Medawachchiya ..	63.7	83.3	78.71	18.46
71. Anuradhapura ..	60.4	71.0	74.36	36.29
72. Kalawewa ..	53.3	68.0	77.28	43.13
73. Horowupotana ..	60.7	70.1	74.05	46.43
74. Polonnaruwa ..	60.1	54.2	54.89	71.43
75. Alutnuwara ..	36.0	43.6	42.23	17.88
76. Badulla ..	62.2	70.6	63.88	13.46
77. Bandarawela ..	58.8	74.1	64.72	4.62
78. Welimada ..	51.9	73.1	64.63	13.58
79. Haputale ..	62.0	70.3	64.25	21.92
80. Buttala ..	52.1	58.0	47.89	-2.22
81. Mawanella ..	52.8	72.1	81.31	26.93
82. Kegalla ..	52.2	72.1	76.98	20.72
83. Dedigama ..	68.6	81.2	76.08	4.62
84. Ruwanwella ..	59.5	79.0	76.83	8.01
85. Dehiowita ..	44.9	70.0	73.94	23.86
86. Kirielle ..	51.8	71.6	61.93	-5.00
87. Ratnapura ..	50.8	75.4	57.54	13.13
88. Nivitigala ..	42.2	76.1	64.15	10.29
89. Balangoda ..	40.0	68.3	69.75	16.76

The percentage polled in whole country in 1956 was 69.08.

The percentage increase in the number of votes in the whole country between 1952 and 1956 was 15.08.

APPENDIX I.

IN THE NAME OF HER MAJESTY, ELIZABETH THE SECOND, QUEEN OF CEYLON AND OF HER OTHER REALMS AND TERRITORIES, HEAD OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Proclamation

BY His Excellency Sir OLIVER ERNEST GOONETILLEKE, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Island of Ceylon and its Dependencies.

O. E. GOONETILLEKE.

KNOW YE that by virtue of the powers vested in me by section 15 of the Ceylon (Constitution) Order in Council 1946, and in pursuance of the provisions of section 27 of the Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Order in Council 1946, I, Oliver Ernest Goonetilleke, Governor-General, do by this Proclamation :—

- (1) dissolve Parliament with effect from the midnight of the Eighteenth day of February, 1956, and summon a new Parliament to meet on the Nineteenth day of April, 1956 ;

- (2) fix the days in the period commencing on April Fourth, 1956, and ending on April Eleventh, 1956, as the dates for the general election of Members of Parliament ;
- (3) specify the Eighth day of March, 1956, as the date on which candidates for election are to be nominated ; and
- (4) specify each place mentioned in the second column of the Schedule hereto as the place of nomination of candidates seeking election for the electoral districts mentioned in the corresponding entry in the first column of that Schedule.

Given at Colombo this Eighteenth day of February, 1956.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.,

N. W. ATUKORALA,
Secretary to the Governor-General.

APPENDIX II.

Bill of Rights

- (1) All inhabitants of Ceylon shall be entitled to full and complete protection of life, liberty and security of person, without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race, or religion.
- (2) All inhabitants of Ceylon shall be entitled to the free exercise, whether public or private of any creed, religion, or belief whose practices are not inconsistent with public morals or public order.
- (3) All inhabitants of Ceylon have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and in particular, persons belonging to any religious, linguistic or racial minority shall be entitled to use the right of association for the purpose of furthering their interests as regards their language, culture, religion, ethnical character or social relations.
- (4) All Ceylon nationals shall be equal before the law, and shall be entitled without discrimination to equal protection of the law, and shall enjoy the same civil and political rights without distinction as to race, language or religion.

Differences of race, language or religion shall not prejudice any Ceylon national in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights including admission to public employment, functions and honours or the exercise of professions and industries.

- (5) No restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Ceylon national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, in religion, in the Press or in publications of any kind or at public meetings.

Adequate facilities shall be given to all Ceylon nationals to use their own language orally or in writing before the Courts or in transacting their business with public departments or administrative bodies whether local or central or in performing their functions as members of local bodies or of the Houses of Parliament.

Any section of citizens having a distinct language or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.

- (6) Ceylon nationals who belong to racial, religious or linguistic minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as the

other Ceylon nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control charitable, religious and social institutions, schools, and other educational establishments with the right to use their own language and to exercise their religion freely therein.

- (7) In the public educational systems in towns and districts in which a considerable proportion of Ceylon nationals belonging to a linguistic minority are resident, adequate facilities shall be provided for ensuring that education shall be given to the children of such nationals through the medium of their own language.
- (8) In towns and districts where there is a considerable proportion of Ceylon nationals belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities, these minorities shall be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, Municipal or other budget, for educational, religious or charitable purposes.
- (9) Rights of ownership shall be safeguarded. No person's goods or property shall be expropriated for the public

benefit, except in the circumstances and in the manner prescribed by law, and on condition that just compensation is paid.

- (10) Every inhabitant of Ceylon has the right to an effective remedy by the Courts of law for acts violating the fundamental rights granted by the Constitution of Ceylon.
- (11) There shall be no amendment of any provision in this chapter unless it is passed by three-fourths of the total number of members in the House of Representatives.

APPENDIX III.

Constituencies

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| No. 1.—Colombo North | No. 46.—Kankasanturai |
| 2.—Colombo Central. | 47.—Jaffna. |
| 3.—Colombo South. | 48.—Kopai. |
| 4.—Wellawatta-Galkissa. | 49.—Point Pedro. |
| 5.—Ja-ela. | 50.—Chavakachcheri. |
| 6.—Negombo. | 51.—Mannar. |
| 7.—Mirigama. | 52.—Vavuniya. |
| 8.—Gampaha. | 53.—Trincomalee. |
| 9.—Attanagalla. | 54.—Muttur. |
| 10.—Kelaniya. | 55.—Kalkudah. |
| 11.—Avisawella. | 56.—Batticaloa. |
| 12.—Kotte. | 57.—Paddiruppu. |
| 13.—Horana. | 58.—Kalmunai. |
| 14.—Moratuwa. | 59.—Pottuvil. |
| 15.—Panadura. | 60.—Puttalam. |
| 16.—Kalutara. | 61.—Nikaweratiya. |
| 17.—Matugama. | 62.—Dodangaslanda. |
| 18.—Agalawatta. | 63.—Kurunegala. |
| 19.—Dambulla. | 64.—Dambadeniya. |
| 20.—Matale. | 65.—Wariyapola. |
| 21.—Minipe. | 66.—Dandagamuwa. |
| 22.—Wattegama. | 67.—Bingiriya. |
| 23.—Kadugannawa. | 68.—Chilaw. |
| 24.—Kandy. | 69.—Nattandiya. |
| 25.—Galaha. | 70.—Medawachiya. |
| 26.—Gampola. | 71.—Anuradhapura. |
| 27.—Maturata. | 72.—Kalawewa. |
| 28.—Nuwara Eliya. | 73.—Horowupotana. |
| 29.—Talawakele. | 74.—Polonnaruwa. |
| 30.—Kotagala. | 75.—Alutnuwara. |
| 31.—Nawalapitiya. | 76.—Badulla. |
| 32.—Maskeliya. | 77.—Bandarawela. |
| 33.—Ambalangoda-Balapitiya | 78.—Welimada. |
| 34.—Baddegama. | 79.—Haputale. |
| 35.—Udugama. | 80.—Buttala. |
| 36.—Galle. | 81.—Mawanella. |
| 37.—Weligama. | 82.—Kegalla. |
| 38.—Akuressa. | 83.—Dedigama. |
| 39.—Matara. | 84.—Ruwanwella. |
| 40.—Hakmana. | 85.—Dehiowita. |
| 41.—Deniyaya. | 86.—Kiriella. |
| 42.—Beliatta. | 87.—Ratnapura. |
| 43.—Hambantota. | 88.—Nivitigala. |
| 44.—Kayts. | 89.—Balangoda. |
| 45.—Vaddukoddai. | |

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