

SOARING DRUG PRICES!

Patient Moan:

Traders and Racketeers Flourish!!

(From A Special Correspondent)

As a result of the Devaluation of the Rupee by UNP Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, the price of drugs has generally doubled. In the case of drugs of Swiss origin, the Swiss drug manufacturers have increased their CIF price on top of the Revaluation of their currency. As a result, some drugs are now three or four times the 1977 price. An example of the latter is the drug "Visken" produced by Sandoz in Basle.

Many people in the older age group have illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, epilepsy etc. which are controlled by the regular use of drugs. At a drug store today it is not unusual to see a customer looking dumbfounded when he is informed of the new price of his familiar drug. Here are some examples:-

Drug	Old Price		New Price	
	Rs.	cts.	Rs.	cts.
Visken (30 tablets)	28.22		73.59	
Fluorouracil (vial)	14.00		37.84	
Garlic pills	9.14		21.71	
Contact Lens soaking solution	18.34		138.16	
Bactrim (antibiotic: 1 tablet)	00.83		1.03	
Epilim (antiepileptic: 100 tablets)	137.46		324.00	
Triaminic	8.06		40.80	

The UNP Government has not contented itself with devaluing the Rupee in the matter of drugs. Unlike the previous United Front Government, it is not committed to supplying the needs of the sick at minimal prices. It was this commitment that led the UF Government to exempt drugs from FEECS and to make the import of drugs a duty of the state. The UNP Government's commitment is to the profits of the private sector. It has, therefore, decided to return more than half the drug imports to the private trade. Drugs can now be imported under any number of brand names. There is once more intense sales promotion by means of advertisements, leaflets, free samples and gifts to medical practitioners. All these additional costs are naturally heaped on the consumer. Doctors once more prescribe the brand of their choice and the innocent

patient is once more made to believe in the magic of highly promoted names and pay through his nose to fatten multinational drug firms and their local agents.

The clock has actually been turned back to pre-1962. The market is being flooded all over again with very profitable, but medically inessential tonics and vitamin preparations

for swallowing by affluent people who do not need them. It is untrue that these private importers will guarantee the availability of all drugs when they are needed. There were numerous instances in the pre-1973 era in which the private sector had defaulted in obtaining essential drugs. Triple Vaccine was a notable example of such lapse.

The UNP Government has once more reduced the import of drugs to the same level as that of dry fish or smoked herring. It is left entirely to the horse-sense of the trader. The Import Controller makes his allocations to the private trader without consulting the National Formulary Committee or the State Pharmaceuticals Corporation about which drugs should be imported and in what quantities. It is even forgotten that, during the last few years, there were no shortages of drugs in the country because the State Pharmaceuticals Corporation carried buffer stocks. So long as the trader makes his profits, what does it matter if the consumer suffers?

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Price: 50 Cts

Rs.350 M. Flour Mill for Nothing!

J.R. Supports Singapore Contract

In the course of his speech on the so-called Greater Colombo Economic Commission Bill, Prime Minister J.R. Jayewardene made an announcement on the proposed Wheat-Flour Mill in Trincomalee that we have several times labelled as a grave act of treachery to our nation. Mr. Jayewardene declared that the mill was going to cost Rs. 350 million and would be set up without a single cent being expended by his Government. We have several times exposed the enormity of this bare-faced lie. The mill is being paid for by conceding full ownership of the bran that is a by-product of the milling of wheat in the mill. We have pointed out that sale of this bran will bring the Singapore firm, Prima, at least 16 million dollars per year or 320 million dollars in 20 years, which is the period in which the bran will legally continue to belong to Prima. 32 million dollars is 5,120 million devalued J.R. Jayewardene rupees. The Singapore firm will, therefore, make a profit of more than 4,500 million rupees on this contract. Does the Prime Minister not realise the hollowness of his utterances on this subject?

The Prime Minister went even further on the subject of this Flour Mill in Trincomalee. He said that the mill would itself come within the Free Trade Zone, so would also a shipbuilding industry that would be set up Trincomalee. The deceitful purpose of calling the Free Trade Zone Bill a "Greater Colombo Economic Commission" will be manifest from these operations in Trincomalee. Not merely so. The Flour Mill also being a FTZ enterprise means that the Government of Sri Lanka will have no control over the Mill's

operations. Further, if the intention was to make the Flour Mill enjoy FTZ benefits, why was it not put up in the Greater Colombo FTZ itself? This would at least have saved the nation enormous costs of transporting the flour from Trincomalee to the South-Western part of the island which consumes two-thirds of the flour.

But now it seems that a shipbuilding industry is also to be located in Trincomalee with FTZ benefits. We have

heard Ministerial pronouncements about transporting the flour from Trincomalee to Colombo by sea. Is the shipbuilding industry Mr. J.R. Jayewardene talks about establishing in Trincomalee to serve the purpose of providing ships to take the flour to Colombo? We demand an answer from the Prime Minister. We also hope that the shipbuilding firm in Trincomalee will have no connection of any sort with the Flour-milling firm, PRIMA.

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Trade Minister Passes The Buck!

Says Confusion Makes Him Scapegoat

(From a Special Correspondent)

The chickens are coming home to roost. Time was when anything wrong in the country could be palmed off on past governments and their ministers. But time is running out. Six months of the new, all powerful, UNP Government will soon be over. Ministers should now be firmly in the saddle, with their own self-belauded policies functioning. If that be not the case it is their inefficiency and incapacity that stand exposed and not the shortcomings of other ministers and other governments in the past. If the new brooms are not sweeping clear, the fault lies not in some old 'kossa' or 'idala' or 'ilapatha'; it lies in the new broom.

Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister of Trade is finding that he has to face up to these facts. Having arrived in office bravely to clean up his predecessor Mr. Ilangaratne's acknowledged mess, he finds the situation slipping out of his hands and falling into a worse mess than the mess for which he has been blaming and denouncing his predecessor. He promised falling prices. Prices have been steadily going up and have now started soaring anew. He promised plentiful supplies. Shortages are showing, growing and persisting in regard to one basic commodity and another. He promised that private importers would give priority to the simple and everyday needs of the needy, the poor and the mass. He now acknowledges that private importers are doing nothing of the sort. They are flooding the market and country with mounting quantities of luxuries and semi-luxuries which only the rich can buy and which the suffering middle classes can only envy. For that is where the fat profits lie; and fat profits are the golden fleece of the private trade. As for the poor why; they can be left to the Government to rescue if it can or left to their non-profit-generating selves to stew in their own juices. Mr. Athulathmudali's threats of dire consequences only convulse the big private importers with secret laughter. They know that they have stronger political controls over the UNP Government than he can hope to have and that they can bring Mr. Athulathmudali to his knees; just as they have done with Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, as no less a UNP luminary than Mr. Esmond Wickremasinghe has shown.

CRI De COUER

Consider Mr. Athulathmudali's *Cri de Couer* in the Government's own *Daily News* of Monday, January 16th.

There is a distinction between trade and the Ministry of Trade and the general public should realize this as early as possible," says Mr. Athulathmudali. There certainly is a distinction; but Mr. Athulathmudali seemed unaware of that distinction when he thought that things would go well for trade and he could claim the distinction of being the cause. Now things have gone away and Mr. Athulathmudali seeks to wash his hands of the responsibility. Unlike the fly on the chariot wheel, he does not want to claim that he is kicking up the dust!

"The country believed" says the *Daily News* reporting Mr. Athulathmudali, "that the Trade Ministry was responsible for everything in relation to prices, supplies and demand not realizing that each was a multi-faced problem with numerous ministries involved with the Trade Ministry in the Centre". The adjective qualifying "problem" is brilliant, but the capital "C" given to "Centre" is more fetching. Mr. Athulathmudali manifestly does not belittle or underestimate his own importance—doesn't want anyone else to make that mistake either. So he not only places himself magnanimously at the centre of the picture and just by way of emphasizing his meaning, he gives himself a capital "C". It is a subtle touch in a field which is usually blatant—the field of politics.

We do not know what those other Ministers, who are to set around him like satellites around a central sun, think of his remarks; especially when, speaking of the Prime Minister's intention to set up "a co-ordinating authority to cope with all problems in relation to supply, demand and marketing," he says: "This would prevent each ministry from trying to pursue individual unrelated policies muddled, in some instances". Mr. Athulathmudali's adjectives are indeed inspired! In this instance we have "muddled" policies. But who has done the muddling through "unrelated" muddling—another inspired adjective which should have far-reaching, if not sweet, repercussions! Who? Not himself of course; for that would be too much like Satan denouncing Sin! He means, of course, his "supply, demand and marketing" colleagues; amongst whom we can certainly discern the Minister of Food and Co-operatives.

Poor dear Mr. Herath, who, we agree with Mr. Athulathmudali, is a muddler in excelsis! See what he has done with the co-operatives, which he came in order to suppress in the interests of the private trade and on which he now relies to carry through the ration cut—and also to distribute thereafter whatever remains for the Government to distribute. Let it be added that Mr. Herath is in the distinguished company of the Finance Minister, in whose Budget speech the jettisoning of the co-operatives in favour of the private trade occupied a prominent place. Or has Mr. Herath decided that he will neither cut his own throat nor allow his colleague, the Finance Minister, to cut it for him? And does Mr. Athulathmudali include Mr. Ronnie de Mel among the muddlers? Who else looks after supply, if not demand? For ourselves, we must admit we thought the Ministry of Trade had something to do with supply; while, we must also admit, we always thought that it was the consumer who provided the demand. But, then; we must learn from the neo-capitalist, socialists, of whom Mr. Athulathmudali, like his leader, Mr. J. R. Jayawardene is one.

Other Scapegoats

We have some inkling of what is in Mr. Athulathmudali's mind from another passage which we quote:—"Prices, the Minister explained, were controlled by supply, demand, monetary policies, commercial dealings and the like, over which he had no control". Monetary policies are certainly in the hands of the Finance Minister, so, clearly, he is one of the muddlers!

Supply, says Mr. Athulathmudali above, is not in his control! Market and marketing he points out, are the primary responsibility of his Ministry. And that he says is where his shoe pinches. Quoting himself,—"a habit, incidentally, that marked Stalin in his time—he reminds that he said in the National State Assembly. "If I have no supply for which I am not directly responsible, I have the difficulty of coping with the demand. On the other hand, if the demand declines and the supply increases, then I have the goods on my hands and allegations could be made that the stuff is rotting in my possession."

What a pellucid statement of a trade minister's dilemma, arising almost entirely from trade being more and more in private hands under that Trade Ministry's encouragement. How much Mr. Ilangaratne must be regretting that Mr.

Athulathmudali was not there to defend him with the lapidary sentences with which Mr. Athulathmudali now defends himself. The SLFP should never have let him go.

Here is Mr. Athulathmudali's parting shot, still quoting himself speaking in the NSA: "An example of this confusion which makes the Trade Ministry the scapegoat was seen in the recent failure of the onion crop in the north and the consequent shortage in the domestic market. The root cause of the issue was the lack of seed onions, the distribution of which the Ministry of Trade had no hand in—yes, the blame was laid at our door."

So, Mr. E. L. Senanayake is also a muddler! For, onion production belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Anyhow, "scapegoat" is the word. Mr. Athulathmudali is the scapegoat for the failures of other Ministers. Others fail him. He never fails himself. For he like any trader, is the man in the middle. To quote him for the last time: "The equation between supply and demand which resulted in

equilibrium price, markets and marketing were the primary responsibilities of the Ministry of Trade."

A tight-rope walker too maintains equilibrium. He topples when he fails. All we can say of Mr. Athulathmudali's effort to maintain through "markets and marketing" an "equilibrium price" which comes from "the equation between supply and demand," is that, on his own admission, he has not slowed the equation and brought about an "equilibrium price." On the contrary, he has presided over renewed shortages and prices soaring anew. If he goes on at this rate, he certainly will equate himself to the celebrated President of the Board of Trade of whom A. P. Herbert said in a famous lampoon:—

They say this high official
Is grossly overpaid,

There wasn't any Board; and
now

There isn't any trade!"

Scapegoat indeed! Others call it "passing the buck"!

DOLLAR SLIDES DOWN

"The dollar is in the same predicament as the pound sterling was, let us say 18 months ago and when the dollar catches a cold it is bad for all other currencies," quips a London banker who is struck by the number of 'switch orders' from overseas to convert from dollar to sterling in the bank's fat deposit accounts.

With the downward slide of the dollar, most importers in the EEC markets are asking for two-tier CIE quotes from overseas companies—a dollar quote coupled with a quote in a European currency. The Americans are understandably concerned. In West Germany, for example, medium-size hotels refuse to accept dollar-denominated travellers cheques. Taxi drivers and tourist shops have worked out their own dollar-mark rate—which is two marks per dollar even though the official exchange rate hovers around 2.07. In London they would have sterling, rather than dollar travellers cheques.

There is a growing impression here that the Carter administration cannot match up to the situation. Even though the United States activated two pools of funds amounting to \$25,000 millions in foreign currencies to buy up dollars and stop the hemorrhage, most European bankers reckon that the bleeding still continues.

West Europeans are uneasy about the latest warning to the U. S. administration from Saudi Arabia's Oil Minister Sheikh Yamani that unless President Carter does more to support the weak dollar, the Saudis might suggest to other oil-producing countries to cease basing oil prices on the U. S. currency. On conservative estimates, the Saudis are believed to have some \$80,000 millions in oil money invested

in the United States and so Sheikh Yamani's concern is understandable. The OPEC countries, who base their crude oil prices on the international value of the U. S. dollar alone, find that the recent fall in the dollar value has effectively reduced their oil income as other western currencies like the Japanese yen, the British pound and the German mark have strengthened.

The Saudis feel that enough is not being done by the Carter administration to strengthen the dollar's position. Their new proposal is causing some concern in Western banking circles. At the next meeting of OPEC, Sheikh Yamani will propose that oil-producing countries base their crude oil price on a "basket" of Western currencies, which would probably include the sterling, the Swiss and French francs, the mark, the yen, as well as the American and Canadian dollars.

This is something like what the Reserve Bank of India is doing for the value of the rupee whose rate is fixed with reference to the daily exchange rate movements of a select number of currencies, while retaining in the rupee's case the pound sterling as the intervention currency. The value of the "currency basket" would fluctuate daily depending on the rates for the currencies in the basket. This is why during the last few months, while the rupee has appreciated vis-a-vis some of the currencies like the sterling (and marginally against the dollar) the rupee rate against the mark and the yen has depreciated.

(Contd. on Page 3)

ARAB POPULAR CONFERENCE STATEMENT GREET'S STRUGGLE OF MASSES

The Secretariat General of the Arab Popular Conference has greeted the struggle mounted by the Arab masses throughout the Arab Homeland and inside the occupied territories in particular. It also called upon various segments of the Palestinian Resistance to speed up the implementation of the Tripoli agreement, concerning the unity of the Palestinian Resistance organization.

This came in a statement issued by the Secretariat at the end of a 3-day conference held at the Building of the National Leadership of the Arab Baath Socialist Party in Baghdad.

In the course of the conference, the Secretariat reviewed the progress made in carrying out the resolutions of the Arab Popular Conference held in Libya from December 5 to 8 1977. It also reviewed the fierce imperialist assault on the people of western Sahara where French planes have been attacking the people with napalm bombs in collusion with reactionary forces in Morocco.

The Secretariat further discussed troop concentrations on the eastern southern frontiers of Libya. Those concentrations were intended to commit a fresh aggression on Libya following the failure of the first aggression committed by the Sadat regime in July, 1977.

The Secretariat also discussed the reactionary moves directed against the Arab people of Algeria and noted the mounting role played by West Germany in the general texture of the plot woven up against the Arab nation.

The Secretariat noted with a great deal of pride the escalation of the struggle waged by the masses of Arab Nation throughout the Arab Homeland and inside the occupied territories in particular.

The Secretariat adopted resolutions concerning the following points:

1. The formulation of all necessary legal and political measures preliminary to committing traitor Sadat to trial.
2. Conducting urgent consultation with the Arab states to withdraw recognition of the Sadat regime, have it expelled from the Arab League, move the League head office from the capital of the Sadat regime to another Arab capital, and apply the rules of the Arab boycott of the Zionist entity to all firms and individuals who maintain dealings with the Zionist entity.
3. Declaring boycott of the literary production of all persons who joined or will join Sadat in his national betrayal.
4. Inviting the AFRO-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) to expel Yusef al-Sebai'e from post of Secretary-General.
5. Making arrangements to celebrate January 18th and 19th as days of solidarity with the Egyptian people in memory of the Egyptian uprising against the traitorous Sadat regime on January 18 and, 19, 1977.

On the Palestinian level, the Secretariat General adopted resolutions concerning the following points:

1. Inviting all segments of the Palestinian Resistance movement to speed up the implementation of the Tripoli agreement on the unity of the Palestinian organisations.
2. Introducing all necessary measures to backing the struggle of the Arab people of Palestine inside the occupied territories.
3. Addressing notices to Arab and international organisations declaring the illegality and nullity of any relinquishment by any Arab ruler of any part of Arab patrimony.

Vietnam was Patient

"When the U. S. imperialists replaced the French colonialists and started their aggression in Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, the militant solidarity of the three peoples again exerted an invincible strength to resist this unprecedentedly ruthless neo-colonialist war. The people and armed forces of Vietnam, in this historic encounter with the huge war machinery of the imperialist ringleader, were all the time aware that they were fighting not only for their own independence and freedom, but also for the common victory of three peoples. They shared all blasts to assist the people and armed forces of Kampuchea in defeating the common enemy. In return they received very precious assistance from the Kampuchean people as well as the fraternal people of Laos. The Communist Party of Vietnam has repeatedly told us not to forget, and to teach other generations to come not to forget, our deep love and profound gratitude to the peoples of Laos and Kampuchea.

"After U.S. neo-colonialism and the reactionary forces employed by it were routed from this region, we were filled with joy at the brilliant prospects of the Kampuchean revolution and of the solidarity between Vietnam and Kampuchea.

On the Lebanese level, the Secretariat Resolved to back up the **Lebanese Patriotic Movement** and promote the unity and Arab character of Lebanon. The Secretariat further decided to send a delegation to Lebanon to confirm solidarity with the Lebanese patriotic forces. November 9th is henceforth to be observed as a day of solidarity with the Arab people of Lebanon.

The Secretariat underlined support to armed Arab liberation movements particularly the Al-qia Alhamra Front and Wadi Althahab Front.

In another resolution, the Secretariat called for the release of all political detainees. It emphasised the need of promoting solidarity with African peoples in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia and called for promoting ties with the socialist states and progressive parties in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. Over the issue of the establishment of the progressive pan-Arab front the Secretariat decided to defer action till the next meeting so as to give time to members to present their observations on the draft charter of the Front.

The statement of the Secretariat General referred to the meeting the members of the Secretariat have had in Baghdad with Comrade Saddam Hussein, RDC Vice-Chairman. It said that a dialogue marked with comprehensiveness and profundity took place ranging, in the forefront, the question of establishing an endurance front.

The statement expressed deep thanks to the Leadership of the Arab Baath Socialist Party in Iraq under President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr for patronising the work of the Secretariat General.

The Secretariat is now to proceed to Damascus to open a dialogue on the resolutions of the Arab popular conference.

Courtesy: 'Baghdad Observer'

ches. But it is regrettable that Kampuchea has disregarded the traditional solidarity built with the blood of the two peoples, Kampuchea, making friends their foes, repeatedly sent its armed forces to Vietnam, attacking and occupying many parts of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam causing innumerable losses in lives and property to our people. We were filled with horror and sadness at the sights of destroyed Vietnamese villages, of Vietnamese—old people, children and women—beheaded, disembowelled and charred by Kampuchean soldiers.

Kampuchea's Handiwork

"Treasuring our friendship with the Kampuchean people we responded with patience and tolerance. But Kampuchea kept violating our territory and challenging us. So, to defend our territory and sovereignty, to protect our people and their property, our armed forces and people in threatened areas could not help but fight back to drive away people who had brought disaster to our country. This regrettable bloodshed was entirely the handiwork of Kampuchea, and our armed forces and people were fully justified in taking recourse to legitimate self-defence.

"The whole thing is as clear as daylight. But the Kampuchean Government is trying to make black white, charging us with aggression and plunder, alleging that we do not want peaceful negotiations. But who have acted patiently through to the end? Who have rejected the goodwill of the Vietnamese Government? Who have deliberately fanned the flames of national hatred, which only benefits the common enemy of the two peoples?

"Let those Kampuchean who have perpetrated towering crimes, in all conscience, ask themselves these questions. Let them put these same questions to their people, and let them not think they can fool the world public either.

Friendship Will Prevail

"The public abroad, anxious about the situation which Kampuchea has unjustifiably caused, know how much our patience has been stretched, we who advocate friendship with Kampuchea, who advocate peace and friendship with all other nations in this region. People of conscience abroad are also of the opinion that we have been unduly patient. Indeed, the Vietnamese Government, through many official notes to Kampuchea, has repeatedly proposed that the two sides conduct fraternal talks to settle the border issue. This is and will always be the policy of our party and State.

"And despite the regrettable conflicts deliberately started by Kampuchea we consistently uphold solidarity and advocate negotiations for a peaceful settlement to the border issue, as pointed out in the Statement of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

"We firmly believe that justice will triumph. Genuine friendship between the peoples of Vietnam and Kampuchea will prevail".

—Editorial in "Nhan Dan" newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Dollar Slides...

(Contd. from Page 2)

How the OPEC countries will organise their proposed currency 'basket' remains to be seen. If meanwhile, the dollar starts a convincing recovery, there may not be a case for the currency 'basket' for crude prices. Till now the Saudis were the strongest supporters of the dollar. But now that Sheikh Yamani has come up with his suggestion, the dollar is again on the slide. There is still no need to press panic signal buttons but it is an unfolding scenario one views with some concern.

Notes & Comments

Flour Mill Absurdity!

We are adopting as our "Notes & Comments" this week, the following quotation from an article by Santiago de Silva on the middle pages of the "Ceylon Daily News", in view of the importance and relevance of the views expressed in it. It is a subject on which we have commented over and over again—and even elsewhere in this issue.

—EDITOR

"Last but not least, we have lost sight completely of a very valuable feed which is available on our doorstep, namely, wheat bran and pollard which is produced by the Flour Milling Corporation. Due to the extraordinary inconsistencies of the FECCS administration, it was found much more profitable to export the wheat bran and pollard than use it locally.

"With the abandonment of the FECCS scheme, the advantage of exporting wheat bran and pollard will disappear and there is no reason why the entirety of this quantity, estimated at about 20,000 tons, should not be used here. It is a completely adequate feed for low-yielding cows and with the addition of coconut poonac, it would form a suitable feed for high-yielding cows as well.

"It is understood that a very large flour mill, four times the capacity of the present flour mill, is to be established in Trincomalee. The production of wheat bran and pollard at this mill will be almost 100,000 tons per annum, and it is indeed a very great pity that this entire production is to be given away to feed the livestock of Singapore and Hongkong while our livestock industry languishes.

Is it too late to rectify this absurdity?

"The usefulness of this 100,000 tons of pollard could be judged from the fact that it would provide feed for about 100,000 cows yielding about a gallon of milk a day or 300 gallons per annum. As the price of milk is today about Rs. 8 per gallon, the total value of the quantity of milk which could be produced on this feed is about Rs. 240 millions.

"The Minister of Agriculture has announced that he has arranged for the purchase of Dutch condensed milk to the value of Rs. 90 million to be delivered over the next five years, while we are discarding the possibility of producing Rs. 240 million worth per annum by giving away the pollard to Singapore and Hongkong.

"As the tending of 100,000 cows would give employment to about 10,000 men, plus a similar number engaged on pasture production etc., employment opportunities are also being thrown away. There is also the very useful addition to our meat supplies."

It is nearly 21 years since Sinhala, the language of the majority of the people of this country, appeared on the political agenda of a party campaigning for power. Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike who championed the cause of the so-called Pancha Maha Bala Vegaya which, it may be said, wanted to see the Sinhala Language enthroned, held out to the Sinhala masses the promise of making Sinhala the Official Language within 24 hours. It remains to be seen whether the Sinhala Language even at the end of 24 years, which includes the regimes of both the SLEP and the UNP chauvinists, in turn, will effectively become the Official Language of the country.

We have seen how governments so far have been unable to match their deeds with their war-like words in regard to the status of Sinhala. We have seen how one Minister of Public Administration after the other has sent out circulars ordering government departments to work in Sinhala. This obviously conceals the fact that each succeeding Minister has found that the place of the Sinhala Language had been usurped by some other during the tenure of office of his predecessor.

The place of Sinhala is defined by the Official Language Act and its subsequent amendments. The place of Tamil is also defined. These are the languages recognized for official use in Sri Lanka. Although there are Sinhala folk who feel that the place given to the Tamil language is too much and Tamil folk who feel it is too little, the point we are raising is that the place of both the languages defined in the statute is being denied to both alike by certain elements who are probably hoping to enthroned the English Language as the one and only official language of the country. In this reactionary attempt, they are aided, on the one hand, by those Sinhalese who have never been able to adjust themselves to the demand of the Sinhalese masses who want to do their business with the state in the only language they know; and, on the other hand, by those Tamils who would rather have English as the official language and not Sinhala.

The net result of all these forces working in opposite directions has been the resurgence of English in the Official Circles. This is not a

HUMBUG ABOUT SINHALA

sudden development. English was never rooted out from its official moorings. The bureaucrats and English educated elements saw to it that English was retained in some unobtrusive manner as a language of administration.

The self-defeating and often hypocritical manner in which successive governments implemented the official language policy can be shown clearly in two places.

Before the Official Languages Act came into effect, we had only one language medium for higher (university) education and that was English. Today we have three media in the university as well as in schools. For which country are students being educated in the English medium?

runs the other way, being from English to Sinhala and Tamil, not vice versa.

Now, we, come to the role of English. It is an international language of a global scale. It is also a language in which a vast amount of knowledge is being circulated, specially in regard to Technology and Science and Medicine and Commerce. What has the Sinhala Language got to offer? In comparison, one could say: 'nothing'. It is in this light that we say that English must be made a compulsory language in all our schools and it should be of a good standard too.

It is evident that the 'official' status of the Sinhala Language is being maintained at a terrible cost to the country. Today all our life activities are going on a global scale and the

Communications

This is the ruse by which the privileged class in Sri Lanka held on to and strengthened those positions and ensured that their off-spring would continue to enjoy those privileges. It will be interesting to find out who exactly is educated in English. Are we under obligation to provide an English stream for foreign students? But then, no other country provides education for our students in Sinhala. Is the public aware that only the Sinhalese student is debarred from getting his education in the English medium in our schools? For whom is the English Stream, then? Yes, for whom?

Today, we have three official languages, not just Sinhala. Sinhala is the Official language for the under-dog Sinhala-educated masses. Tamil is the official language for the Tamil masses who continue to be nursed and brought up on the 'language diet' by their English-speaking mentors. English itself has not only continued but also assumed greater significance in the Administration of the country as a third official language. The Department of Public Administration itself, issues all circulars in these three languages, the Sinhala and the Tamil versions printed on either side of the same paper and the English version called a translation, on a separate sheet. Everybody knows, of course, that the translation process

Sinhala language used in this tiny island cannot compete with English. True, Sinhala is our own dear mother tongue but it has its limitations. We can never get it to play the role that English plays.

In this context, it is natural that English tries to push Sinhala away from the official language pedestal too. The English educated have the edge over there, everywhere. The purely Sinhala-educated find themselves pushed further and further down, both economically and socially. That is the better truth.

So, the language policy has made the majority community, actually a third class community by compulsion. Those who have had the privilege of an English Education maintained their stranglehold on the country in spite of a few Piyadasas and Appuhamis.

What, then is the solution?

There can be no English Stream for a privileged group in the Schools and the University. No! Let the cry be taken up by all those Sinhalese and Tamils who want equal opportunities, who want a place for their mother tongues. Let English be made compulsory in all Schools. That is the first step.

I would have given the next step also here itself, but I fear that the aging U.N.P. leader, J.R. Jayawardena would stop his march to Janadipathi Mandiraya and start walking to Kandy!

— Nandi Samaranyaka

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