



Speeches and Writings  
of  
Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam

Introduced by  
H. Kumarasingham

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## Introduction

One hundred years ago on 11 December 1919, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam addressed the inaugural session of the Ceylon National Congress as its first president. At 66 years of age the veteran Ceylonese statesman and scholar was not looking back on a career of accomplishments and accolades, but instead was daring to lead his country's men and women into a new political age. In fact, Arunachalam born into a privileged and patrician background and who had diligently given near unbroken service to the Crown and Colony since returning from Cambridge in April 1875, entered the most radical phase of his life on retirement from the Ceylon Civil Service in 1913. Rather than enjoy rest from his long labours, the chance to answer the call to lead Ceylon towards self-government and its political awakening was fuelled by the need for such action and being released from the neutrality demanded of his public offices.

Looking back, his time prior was in preparation for this political moment. After almost forty years in the Civil Service, Arunachalam had had a chance to professionally and intellectually delve deep into the affairs of Ceylon. For

example, his ground-breaking Census Report of 1901, which was described in *The Times* of London as the “most comprehensive authority on the ethnology of Ceylon and of its varied people, their history, their religions, languages and literature”,\* enabled a thorough examination of the country and its people and also their predicament and promise. Additionally, in 1910 the first volume of *A Digest of the Civil Law of Ceylon* appeared (further volumes never came), which charted expertly and elegantly the rich and diverse legal traditions of Ceylon, and which received ‘advice and encouragement’ from his friend from undergraduate days in Cambridge, the great F. W. Maitland.† During these years Arunachalam was also very active in other spheres that encouraged and gave vent to his aspirations for Ceylon. As a student at what would become Royal College and then gaining a place at Christ’s College, Cambridge in 1871 where he flourished in Classics and Mathematics, among other subjects, he knew the importance of education, history, and sense of national worth. In this he mirrored similar views

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\* James T. Rutnum, *Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam – Scholar and Statesman 1853-1924*, Colombo, 1953, p 11

† T. Nadaraja, *The Legal System of Ceylon in its Historical Setting*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972, pp xiv-xv

held by his friends at Christ's, Ananda Mohan Bose and Syed Mahmood, who achieved comparable eminence and contributed respectively to what he described as the 'intellectual and political regeneration' in what would become India and Pakistan. Arunachalam was the critical force in the Ceylon University Association founded in 1906 to create a university in the island emulating Cambridge, and the same year authored *Sketches of Ceylon History*, which not only was one of the first popular books on Ceylonese history, but also was at pains to show the multi-civilizational splendour and significance of the pre-European colonial age. Even as a Civil Servant, Arunachalam, had flirted with controversy by publishing two articles in the *Ceylon Observer* in 1902 under the telling pseudonym 'Reform', which strongly advocated that Ceylon was 'ripe' for self-government almost half a century before independence. Suspicions of his political views possibly held back his government career and very likely blocked his appointment to the Supreme Court.\*

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\* K. M. de Silva, "Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam (1853-1924), in *Legal Personalities – Sri Lanka*, volume I, Colombo: Law & Society Trust, 2005, pp 117-119



As the first Ceylonese to be President of the local branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1916, he sought, perhaps mindful of the ethos of the Athenaeum Club in London of which he was a long-time member, to encourage discussion, exchange, and the promotion of literary and scholarly excellence among the leaders of society. Just as Arunachalam in Cambridge or London never became a 'brown sahib' that digested Western ideas and styles unquestionably and over-enthusiastically, nor was he in Ceylon beguiled by Eastern philosophy and traditions to such a degree that other influences were not welcome. As Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer commented after Arunachalam's death, his mind had 'embedded in it much original thought' as someone 'to whom Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, and Tamil literature were equally open books'.\* To this list Sinhala traditions and texts can also be added. Arunachalam was especially interested in the ancient 'great chronicle' the *Mahavamsa*, and also had the skill to see how the legend of King Vijaya recalled the adventures and life of Ulysses in the

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\* Sir P. Arunachalam, *Studies and Translations (Philosophical and Religious) with a Foreword by Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar*, Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries, 1937, p vii

*Odyssey* and be able to cite precisely from each book the pertinent passages.\* Like his famous cousin, Ananda Coomaraswamy, he soaked in and savoured eastern art, philosophy, and literature. However, this and his eloquent attacks on colonial rule as practiced in Ceylon, did not lead to callow denunciations of the West or what it represented. Indeed, as Robert Aldrich has argued, “Despite his coruscating critiques of British imperialism and Western commercialisation, he never rejected Europeans, European cultures or the forms of democratic government that he witnessed in Britain.” He was also not immune to the ‘undoctrinaire socialism’ that wafted around Cambridge and his group of friends like Edward Carpenter.†

While there is no reason to doubt his intellectual curiosity, erudition or scholarship, it is not too much of an assertion to claim that Arunachalam’s interest and propagation of history, particularly when it embraced Ceylon, was motivated by a keen Whiggish political desire to craft Ceylon’s own ‘Island story’ that would foster a

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\* For example see P. Arunachalam, *Sketches of Ceylon History*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993 [Colombo, 1906], p 20

† Robert Aldrich, *Cultural Encounters and Homoeroticism in Sri Lanka – Sex and Serendipity*, London: Routledge, 2014, p 38

political message and a banner for all communities to march under. In turn this would, ideally, forge support for a political programme leavened with an Arunachalam credo consisting of patriotism, education, spirituality, and development appealing to all Ceylonese groups that would make the call for self-government and reform irresistible. Despite being preferred with ancestral and imperial titles, landed wealth, and inhabiting a grand residence, 'Ponklar', in Colombo's socially walled Cinnamon Gardens,\* he attempted to reach out to those less fortunate, founding the first workers' union in the country one hundred years ago on 25 June 1919, the Ceylon Workers' Welfare League, becoming its first president with an objective to ameliorate conditions of 'coolie' labour. E. W. Perera stated that in face of gross injustice, such as the colonial government's heavy handling of 1915 riots, Arunachalam would be "blazing with indignation like a lambent flame...doing all he possibly could to burn up and withdraw these iniquities."†

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\* Despite living there he stated in a speech included here in "Constitutional Reforms – II": 'Look at the houses in the Cinnamon Gardens, the utterly bourgeois ideal they enshrine, the vulgar show the frippery, aping the villadom of a fifth-rate English town. They spread their poisonous influence far and wide....'

† Rutnam, *Arunachalam*, pp 21-22

Arunachalam in one assessment “belonged to the mainstream of Gladstonian liberalism, and was a man of radical outlook in politics, and a strong social conscience. To the end of his days he remained consistent to these principles.”\*

The 1915 riots led to Arunachalam creating, leading and contributing in his sixties to various political fora such as the Ceylon Reform League and Ceylon National Association and finally the most important, Ceylon National Congress. The creation of the Congress was meant, in Arunachalam’s eyes, as Neil DeVotta argues, to follow the Indian National Congress and “fashion a Ceylonese nationalism that promoted interethnic unity.”† In James Manor’s judgement Arunachalam was ‘a Tamil of vision and brilliance’ under whose leadership the Congress strived to create “a major force on the basis of communal cooperation and at least occasional extra-constitutional agitation.”‡ As Michael Roberts’ peerless introduction to the four volume

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\* De Silva, “Arunachalam”, p 139

† Neil DeVotta, *Blowback – Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004, p 75

‡ James Manor, *The Expedient Utopian – Bandaranaike and Ceylon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p 72

*Documents of the Ceylon National Congress and Nationalist Politics in Ceylon 1929-1950* argues, for all the attempts of Arunachalam and his cohort to encourage a vernacular nationalism, such as when he urged at the Royal College Prize Giving of 1906 the need to learn Ceylonese literature and geography to fuel ‘the vigorous growth of national life’, there was still a disconnect since so much of Ceylonese nationalism remained throughout its life an elite affair with its rarefied idiom, language and concepts.\* However, Arunachalam, as he argues in the following pages, believed it was only in Ceylon, not England, where the answers and legitimacy for the country’s destiny lay. Arunachalam said “Ceylon is no pauper begging for alms. She is claiming her heritage”, especially when as he sardonically observed that the island had had the Village Council for over twenty-four centuries, while in England the same, under the name of Parish Council, was only created in 1894. As S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike recalled in his address to celebrate the birth

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\* Michael Roberts, “Introduction, Chapter Three: Nationalisms in Ceylon: Origins, Stimulants and Ingredients” in Michael Roberts (ed.), *Documents of the Ceylon National Congress and Nationalist Politics in Ceylon*, vol. I, Colombo: Department of National Archives, 1977, pp lxvii-lxxviii

centenary in 1953, presided by Sir John Kotelawala at Royal College, Arunachalam in this post-1913 phase made an ‘outstanding political contribution’ for Ceylon’s independence through his ‘political organisation of this country’. Bandaranaike who had been a young Congressman and who collated the party’s handbook remembered that Arunachalam’s “inspiring addresses and utterances stand out among even the contributions of his colleagues who were very great men themselves.”\*

This collection does not include the period when he resigned from Congress over the issue of representation in Colombo for Tamils in 1921, which he believed had been agreed with the Congress hierarchy. Though there were entreaties for him to re-join due to his status and past political exertions he rejected them and subsequently his national influence waned.† Rather the purpose of this

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\* S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, “Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam”, speech delivered to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Arunachalam on 14 September 1953, in S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, *Speeches and Writings*, Colombo: Department of Broadcasting and Information, 1963, pp 541-544

† For analysis of that period see generally Chapter 4 in A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism – Its Origins and Development in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, London: Hurst, 2000 and K. M. De Silva’s, “The Ceylon National Congress in Disarray I, 1920-21: Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam Leaves the Congress”, *Ceylon Journal of*

volume is to bring key inspired and apposite speeches and writings of ecumenical span for a new generation of readers, and not evaluate his rise and fall as a biography would. Yet it cannot be avoided that Arunachalam found himself isolated and ignored just prior to his death. As K. M. De Silva puts it “Arunachalam, like most men who bask too long in the glare of their personal prestige, was self-righteous and self-willed, and when he found his colleagues in the Congress (many of whom he undoubtedly regarded as men of inferior ability and political sagacity) impervious to his ideas, it must have been a frustrating experience.” He was, De Silva continues to some of the new generation, ‘for all his liberalism’ and difference with the conservative members of Congress one of ‘yesterday’s men’, enhanced by a conscious or sub-conscious privilege and superiority.\* As the British MP Colonel Wedgwood’s foreword acknowledges of Arunachalam “There was some conceit, but it was a good conceit”. The study of Sri Lankan

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*Historical and Social Studies*, new series ii, vol. 2, no.1 1972 and “The Ceylon National Congress in Disarray II, 1921-24: The Triumph of Sir William Manning”, *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, new series ii, vol. 3, no.2 1973

\* De Silva, “Arunachalam”, pp 135-137

personalities from the colonial era (and before and after) is prone, as Kumari Jayawardena convincingly puts it, to “getting lost in mythology and fantasized family history”.<sup>\*</sup> It cannot be denied for all the hagiography that his career, if not his life’s goals, ended in failure and the unity between communities he made his mission to make was collapsing around and after him.

The collection of speeches and writings contained in this volume, which first appeared in limited numbers in 1936, centre around what might be described as Arunachalam’s most active and political period. This collection and publication does not attempt to provide a biography of Arunachalam or even to provide career or political highlights. It does not seek to place him next to his notable brother, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan or to compare him to other Sri Lankan leaders. Instead its purpose is to reprint speeches and writings of a man who despite dying almost a century ago provides in his words from the short period between 1913-1921 analyses of Sri Lanka’s problems, opportunities and potential that are still

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<sup>\*</sup> Kumari Jayawardena, *Nobodies to Somebodies – The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka*, London: Zed Books, 2002 p 209



germane today and for the country's reform. The 1936 collection found in Arunachalam's beloved alma mater of Cambridge is difficult to find even in the university libraries, let alone the homes or schools of Sri Lanka. As such his seminal speech 'Our Political Needs'; his famous inaugural presidential address to the Ceylon National Congress, which Sir James Pieris described as a "political bible"; or his searing analysis of the 'Present Political Situation' can be found, but so can other less well known addresses such as his appeal to the Sinhalese Association to restore their language and literature or his arresting 'plea' for a national university for the country. The volume also includes memoranda to the Colonial Office; discussing the plight of Ceylonese and Indian workers; the need for a Hindu revival; and correspondence and meetings with prominent British political figures like the Marquess of Crewe and Colonel Josiah Wedgewood.

Arunachalam was a remarkable man judged by any age in Sri Lankan history. He was constantly aware of the past, but also posterity as this final passage from *Sketches of Ceylon History* implores.

Over the garden of my old college (Christ's) at Cambridge – the college of Milton and Darwin – stands the motto of the noble foundress, the Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. The motto is *Souvent me souvient*: “often it come to my mind”, “often I am reminded”. It is a perpetual reminder to successive generations of the members of her family and of her college, of her ancestors' loyalty to duty, to king and country, and to high ideals. Well would it be for us Ceylonese if we too kept fresh in our hearts the great deeds done and the great ideals cherished by our ancestors, and strove to make ourselves worthy of our inheritance.\*

Ultimately, he wanted to improve the lot of the men and women of Sri Lanka through the example of their ancestors and the potential of their labours. Professor Robert Marrs in his address as Principal to the students and scholars of Ceylon University College, on receipt of the news in January 1924 that the man who had done so much to push for a university had died, eulogised that Arunachalam's

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\* Arunachalam, *Sketches*, p 89

ultimate ideal was the ideal of all of us, to raise the national tone of his countrymen by turning out as generation succeeds generation, ever increasing numbers of true men, men of thought and men of action, who think and act according to the highest standards of human civilization.\*

It is hoped that in that vein this volume of erudite, yet accessibly stimulating speeches and writings may inspire new and future generations of Sri Lankans, just as it was planned when delivered.

Like some elite families during the colonial period, Arunachalam's kin adopted the vogue of crafting a family crest, in the late eighteenth century. The heraldic arms displayed among its components an elephant's head representing the Hindu god *Pillaiyar*, invoked as the 'Remover of Obstacles'. Underneath, a motto taken from the great saga *Mahabharata*, the Sanskrit words *yato dharma sato jaya*, "where there is virtue, there is victory". Even a dispassionate and distant analysis of Arunachalam's career

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\* M. Vythilingam, *Ramanathan of Ceylon – The Life of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan*, vol. II, Chunnakam: Thirumakal Press, 1977, pp 513-514

and motives must concede there was ‘virtue’ in his toils. Yet, dense obstacles remain before the ‘victory’ conch of his social and political ideals for all Sri Lanka’s people can be trumpeted. His great speech ‘Our Political Needs’ ends with words that still resonate over a century after they were delivered –

‘we in Ceylon desire that our Government shall be a Ceylonese Government, that our rulers shall identify themselves entirely with Ceylonese interests and, in the striking words of the *Mahāvansa*, ‘be one with the people’.

*H. Kumarasingham*

*March 2019*

*Edinburgh*

## Foreword

The printing of these speeches is a fine curtain to the great career of a liberal patriot. They sum up how Sir Ponnambalam would like to be remembered, and how those who knew him would like to remember him. For Ceylon, and for many treading the same wearisome path, they are his last message of guidance. I do not know when he died. It does not matter; his immediate work was done, and his lead is there to be followed.

Of course, Sir Ponnambalam had India in his blood, Ceylon as his field and workshop; but in his mind I like to think that he was the perfect, cultured, liberal-minded English gentleman of the 19th century. There is a good deal to be said for a Cambridge which could produce an Arunachalam and a J.C. Smuts. The type is rare enough to-day, and we may justly salute it, and hope for its resurgence. For them life was a duty, career so little respected that they secured respect,

money so unimportant that no one doubted their probity. There was some conceit, but it was a good conceit; they were bad "mixers", but why should they mix? They were linked all over the world by a common love of fair-play and justice, - a common hatred of slavery and cruelty, - a common contempt for the vulgarity of the demagogue and the 'science' of the planner. A little inhuman, but the salt of the world!

In a world gone mad on "race", let us bless those qualities of mind which over-ride race and colour and caste and creed. I am proud to have known two or three in Ceylon, two or three in India, Sun-Yat-Sen in China, a handful here and in America and South Africa,-there have been myriads, -and their lives and example, their love of freedom and justice, will still save the world from tyrants and "blackshirts" and the 'human nature' of the bullies. That is why I write this foreword on Arunachalam.

He was one of the three who had most to do with making the Ceylon Constitution. I helped, too, so I ought to know. But the triumph and the sacrifice was Arunachalam's. He was a Tamil and everyone knows how the Tamils feel. Everyone knows how the Mohammedans in India feel; that they have had their way, and India is divided for ever and democracy has been exorcised. How easy it would have been to insist on Communal Representation in Ceylon. How easy to divide for ever, to make politics the jugglery of race antagonism and religious hatred. The way is not yet smooth in Ceylon; but that it can be travelled at all, is due to Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam.

There are now many worse wrongs in the world than were ever suffered in Ceylon, so I too must make my last bow to Lanka and all my old friends there. Especially to my colleagues in liberty, the Low-country Sinhalese, the team with which Arunachalam rode abreast, - to them I would say, take care to preserve the liberties you won. For this sacrifice and unselfishness

is still needed, and the understanding that liberty and justice are for all.

Some widows build a marble tomb to bury their dead for ever. But I am grateful to Lady Arunachalam that, in his own words, she has made him live.

Rt Honl. Josiah C. Wedgwood PC DSO DL MP



# Constitutional Reform

## I. A Message to the Country

*[The following "Message to the Country," which Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam delivered in 1918 through the medium of the "Ceylon Daily News," represents a suitable Foreword of his own to a Volume dealing in the main with his contributions towards the political emancipation and progress of the Island. The burden of the "Message" was an appeal to the Youth of Ceylon to spiritualise public life by reverting to the ideals of their forefathers and establishing an Aristocracy of intellect, character and self-sacrificing service.]*

New forces are at work among us, a new era is dawning for our country. She needs the devoted service of all her children. Our work has only just begun, and an immense deal lies before us which will try us to the utmost. We have, it is true, made a good, if tardy, beginning. During the year just closed we have organised the movement for Constitutional Reform. The great Conference of 15th December, 1917, will

be a landmark in the history of Ceylon. In our memorials to the Governor and the Secretary of State, we have voiced our immediate political needs and indicated our goal. That goal is Responsible Government on the lines of the Self-Governing Dominions. As a first step to it, we have asked for substantial reforms. There is good reason to believe that our efforts will be crowned with success. At all events, they will not, and must not, cease until the goal is reached.

In our zeal for political reform we must be on our guard against making it our end. We seek it only as a means to an end: We seek it not to win rights, but to fulfil duties-duties to ourselves and to our country. "The Theory of Rights," said Mazzini,

"may suffice to arouse men to overthrow the obstacles placed in their path by tyranny, but it is impotent where the object in view is to create a noble and\_ powerful harmony between the various elements of which a nation is composed. With the theory of happiness as the primary aim of existence we shall only produce egotists who will carry the old passions and desires into the new order of things and introduce corruption into it a few months after."

Peoples, like individuals, have each a divinely appointed and distinct task to perform. Self-development and responsibility are essential to the right fulfilment of that task, and self-development and responsibility are alike impossible without freedom. Kept in leading strings by a grandmotherly Government, we have not the opportunity for the development of our personality. Our capacities have become dwarfed and stunted, the richness of man's life which comes from responsibility and liberty is not for us. Therefore it is we have demanded the right to manage our own lives, make our own mistakes and gain strength by knowledge and experience.

Political power is a solemn responsibility, and its exercise is attended with temptations and risks. Ours are those bred of inexperience (for which the blame is not ours, but rests with those who have denied us the opportunity of experience during a hundred years), and of racial, religious or caste differences. These, however, are greatly exaggerated by our critics, and are hardly so serious as in many a land which is autonomous.

Lord Beaconsfield said of England that it contained two distinct nations, the rich and the poor. The saying is true of every Western country, and has become

more so since his time. There is a yawning gulf of suspicion, hatred and fear between them, such as we in Ceylon can scarcely realize. This cleavage (which is over and above that of race, creed, party, etc.) is largely the product of the materialistic spirit of modern Europe and America. The labourer has exchanged the thralldom of the old Feudal System for the more terrible thralldom of Capitalism.

It has pulled down Christ from the churches and installed in His place the Mammon of unrestricted commerce and industrial power, exploiting the weak and the helpless, regarding men and women not as citizens but as tools of economic power. It has made the masses of the nations "cannon fodder of industry." Its greed for markets and dividends is among the root-causes of the War that is now devastating the world.

It would be a sad day for Ceylon if this inhuman spirit took root in Ceylon and, as in Western countries, dominated Parliament and Government. But there is no doubt that we have all, and especially the English-educated classes, become infected with it. How strenuous we are in the race for wealth and luxury, how little we care as to the means! We hanker for fat dividends in rubber and tea out of the sweat of the brow of coolies kept to their task by cruel and

oppressive laws. We are not squeamish as to making profits out of the degradation and misery of our countrymen plied with drink. The small farmer, the *goyya*, who was the glory of Ceylon, is fast becoming a landless vagabond and hireling. The real makers of the country's wealth, the peasant and the labourer, are pinched with poverty and hunger, while the capitalist and the middleman divide the spoil. The slums of the poor though not quite so bad as in the big cities of Europe, are nests of filth and disease. The children run about untaught, uncared for, their mortality running into hundreds per thousand. To all this we are scarcely sensible, for our bellies are full, our families live in ease and comfort, and we enjoy the blessings of "civilization." Any twinge of conscience we soothe with doles of charity and offerings in the name of religion. I do not forget that the Ceylon Social Service League has an earnest band of workers among the poor in the city of Colombo. But how few are the workers and how little they can do to fight so great and widespread an evil! When shall we realise the truth that you cannot hold any man in the gutter without staying there yourself, and that (as Tolstoy said) the only real help the rich man can give the poor is to get off his back?

The craving for money and luxury at any cost is alien to the genius of our people and civilization. The ideals

and teaching of our great writers, Tamil and Sinhalese, the lives of our parents and grand-parents, were all in the direction of simple living, of the rich sharing their wealth and comforts with the poor. Robert Knox, who lived twenty years among the Sinhalese in the seventeenth century, says of them that they are "very hardy both for diet and weather." Again "riches are not here valued", "nor make any the more honourable, for many of the lower sorts do far exceed these hondrews" (his term for noblemen) "in estate, but it is the birth and parentage that ennobleth." Of the women, "They are in their gait and behaviour very high, stately in carriage, yet they hold it no scorn to admit the meanest to come to speech of them.

They are very thrifty and it is a disgrace to them to be prodigal, and their pride and glory to be accounted near and saving .... Although they be so stately, they will lay their hand to such work as is necessary to be done in the house, notwithstanding they have slaves and servants enough to do it." No finer picture exists in all literature than that drawn by, the Tamil Poet Saint Tiruvalluvar of the householder leading on earth a consecrated life, just in all his dealings, love the very life of his soul, strict with himself, patient and kindly to all, simple in living, liberal in his benefactions, dreading the touch of evil, self-controlled and pure.

We have travelled far from these standards, certainly in the towns. Look at the houses in the Cinnamon Gardens, the utterly bourgeois ideal they enshrine, the vulgar show and frippery, aping the villa-dom of a fifth-rate English town. They spread their poisonous influence far and wide, and are the greatest obstacle to that simplification of life which is our country's most urgent need. It is deplorable that in Ceylon English education has so multiplied our wants, increased the complexity of our life and demoralized us, that those who ought to be indefatigable and devoted in her service spend the greater part of their time in earning money to supply those wants, and spend their leisure, not in intellectual culture or public work, but in trivialities. It is not so in India. One does not see there the same rage for the less admirable aspects of European life and its complicated and expensive trammels. There is certainly a higher level of real Western culture, and of scholarship and research which scarcely exist in Ceylon. In some places I have met quite large circles of highly educated men leading the simple lives of their forefathers on incomes that would hardly keep some of our young men in socks and ties, and able to discuss difficult questions of politics, philosophy, science, with ease and lucidity. Men have deliberately abandoned lucrative

professional careers to devote themselves to the service of their country on a mere pittance. In the Ferguson College of Poona, for example, you see some of the best intellects of India bound by self-imposed vows to practical poverty and engaged in imparting the benefits of higher education to students too poor to enter the Government Colleges. Among the Professors of that College was the illustrious Mr. Gokhale, who taught there for twenty years until he entered the world of politics, his life consecrated to the service of India. The present Principal of Ferguson College, Mr. Paranjyep, a Cambridge Senior Wrangler, is one of many men of the Gokhale type. So also Gokhale's successor in the office of President of the Servants of India Society, Mr. Sri Nivasa Sastri of Madras, member of the Viceroy's Council, who has as his colleagues in that Society a splendid band of workers. Then there is the Saintly Gandhi, the noblest personality in the public life of India, whose priceless services to her in South Africa and at home are known throughout the Empire. There are hundreds of others in all parts of India, less prominent but not less zealous, pursuing in silence their tasks in education or politics or social service, in hospital, school or slum, and seeking no reward.



Why is it that Ceylon does not breed such men? Why are our educated youth wedded to ease and luxury, to ignoble care and peaceful sloth? Why do they make mansions, motor-cars, rubber estates their goal? Is it because the traditions and ideals of plain living and high thinking are less deeply rooted here than in India, and have not been able to resist the poison of Western materialism and its dirty commercialism? I have, however, an unquenchable faith in the youth of Ceylon, and am confident that our sad state is only a passing phase. Youth is the time of noble impulses and generous aspirations, and heeds not

"The barren optimistic sophistries  
Of comfortable moles;"

and our youth have behind them centuries of inherited culture and great traditions. I believe that they will soon find their souls, and leaving mere money-making and wallowing in ease to the baser sort, will revert to the ideals of their forefathers and establish an Aristocracy of intellect, character and self-sacrificing service. Until this is achieved, political reform and power are of little use. Suppose Ceylon won even such a place in the world as Japan has. What would it profit us, with the canker of materialism gnawing at our vitals?

I look to our youth to spiritualise public life and I believe they will do it. They will each seek his own well-being in the well-being of all, will identify his own life with the life of all and his own interest with the interest of all. They will lay at the feet of our dear Motherland the love-offerings of passionate service. They will work in unity that, in the words of Dante, all the intellectual and spiritual forces diffused among men may obtain the highest possible development in the sphere of thought and action. With our youth inspired by such a spirit and such ideals, I look to see our country rise with renewed splendour, paling the glory of Parakrama Bahu the Great and a beacon-light to all lands.

## II. Our Political Needs

*[This was the title of an "Address" which Sir Ponnambalam delivered on 2nd April, 1917, before the Ceylon National Association.]*

"At certain periods in the history of a people," said Cobden, "it becomes necessary to review its principles of domestic policy for the purpose of adapting the Government to the changing and improving conditions of the people." Such a period has now arrived in our history. There is a general feeling that we have outgrown our system of administration, however suitable and useful it may have been in the past.

We are a "Crown Colony," which is defined in the colonial Office List as one "not possessing responsible government and in which the administration is carried on by public officers under the control of the Secretary of State for the Colonies." His control is nominal. He is among- the busiest of the King's Ministers. Not to speak of Parliamentary duties, the concerns of a vast Colonial Empire, with its varied, intricate and delicate problems, especially in connection with the self-governing Colonies, now grown so imperious and

touchy, leave him little time or opportunity to think of so insignificant a dot as Ceylon, except when sensational events occur, such as those of 1915. Recognizing the inherent difficulty of governing us from a distance of 7,000 miles under these conditions, he entrusts the administration to a carefully selected officer and gives him a free hand.

In the House of Commons discussion last August on the events of 1915, the Secretary of State, Mr. Bonar Law, said: "You cannot really control the Government out there except on general principles ..... We must trust in these cases largely to the character of the men who represent the British Government." As to "general principles," I am not aware of any public declaration of the Secretary of State beyond such commonplaces as he uttered in the House of Commons: "We have always made it a rule that those who govern a country should first look to the interest of the country they govern and not to the interest of the mother country." Ceylon is, in this respect, in marked contrast to India, where the lines of policy are from time to time laid down by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State and sometimes even by the Sovereign in person.

We are thus practically under a benevolent despotism wielded by a Governor who is responsible only to Downing Street; and he exercises his powers through a bureaucracy predominantly European: The Governor changes about once in five or six years, of late oftener. There is no settled policy for him to follow, and therefore no continuity of policy. Each Governor makes a policy for himself. He generally spends the first year of his administration looking round and studying local matters and conditions with the help of his Executive Council and Heads of Departments. He prepares a programme and sends it to Downing Street for sanction. Having got it, he subordinates everything to his programme and carries it through the Legislative Council with the help of an official majority. What is left of his programme generally goes by the board, for his successor has his own policy and programme.

The Governor is often blamed for being so autocratic. But the critics forget that the assumption underlying the whole system of our administration is that we are children unable to judge for ourselves and that he is *in loco parentis*. Having conscientiously decided on what is good for us and having only a short time to see it through, he would be shirking his duty if he allowed himself to be turned from his purpose by the ignorant

criticism of "children." It is for us to show that we are grown up and are competent and determined to have a say in the management of our affairs.

We have certainly made great strides, materially and morally, under this system. How great, may be seen from a comparison of the Blue Book figures, say, for 1834 (the first year of the establishment of the Legislative Council) with those of 1915, the latest year for which figures are available.

Year	Population	Revenue Rs	Expenditure Rs	Imports Rs	Exports Rs	Tonnage entered and cleared Tons	Schools	Scholars
1834	1,167,700	3,779,120*	3,848,350*	3,727,260*	1,458,340*	158,510	1,105	13,891
1915	4,106,350	51,545,472	‡ 50,148,001	# 168,446,038	273,377,180	α 10,524,897		

\*At two shillings to the rupee.

‡ Actually Rs. 53,578,015, including expenditure from loan funds and from revenue pending loan.

# In 1913, the year before the war, 199,640,797 rupees.

*α In 1918, 16,126,254 tons.*

For this progress we have to thank a long succession of good Governors and public servants and educationists (official and unofficial), and the capacity of our people to make good use of opportunities. But while we have changed, our system of administration has not changed. We are still, as we were over a hundred years ago, a Crown Colony and have little scope or opportunity for the management of our affairs. In some respects, of late years, we have been distinctly stagnating, if not retrograding. The last two years have shown how little we could do to avert disastrous mistakes on the part of Government-mistakes which His Excellency Sir John Anderson is laboriously endeavouring to repair by wise and sympathetic rule - and how much the British officials, who are the eyes and ears of the Governor, have got out of touch with the people. Ceylon, the pride of the Colonial Office as a model administration, has become discredited; and an administrator and thinker of the distinction of Sir Harry Johnston is, in spite of his official predilection, obliged to speak of "our rich but somewhat misgoverned dependency of Ceylon."

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\* "India and Imperial Federation" in the New Statesman, by Sir H.H. Johnston, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

With the increasing complexity of the administration, the concentration of all power in the hands of the officials and the demands on their time and labour, the best of them can only keep pace with the day's work and are unable to look around or ahead. Important questions affecting our permanent welfare are inevitably neglected. Urgent measures of public safety take their time. Colombo, one of the world's great ports, is ill provided with means to help ships in distress and has seen large steamers sink in sight of her harbour. The city is a nest of foul slums and misery and the abode of plague and tuberculosis. Malaria, which modern science has shown can be mastered, claims its victims throughout the Island by tens of thousands. The conditions of labour are a scandal. While every civilized State is grappling boldly with drink and putting it down, here its clutch its growing tighter and its baneful influence more wide-spread.

A large proportion of our population is without the opportunities of even elementary instruction. As much as 73.6% of the population is illiterate, and in the case of females 89.4%. The percentage of illiteracy is in some provinces as high as 98 for women and 85 for



both sexes.\* Even in our capital city there is total lack of provision for the masses. About 12,000 children are left to shift for themselves, many wandering wild in the streets. Those who have worked in the few night schools in the city and seen the bright, intelligent faces and the yearning for knowledge in the starved bodies of our poor children, wring their hands over the utter neglect and waste of such splendid capacities. Higher education- money spent on which Mr. Joseph Chamberlain declared to be "the best of all possible national investments" -is in as sorry a plight. After twelve decades of British rule we have got no further than secondary schools, which under the high-sounding name of Colleges hide the poverty of our educational equipment. The University College, which Sir Henry McCallum decided upon and which was to be the preparation for a Ceylon University, is still in the distant future. An Indian State like Mysore, administered exclusively by Indians and having scarcely half the revenue of Ceylon, has its own University. There is something in our atmosphere which necessitates a more than ordinary long period of gestation for such schemes. Meanwhile, successive

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\* Ceylon Census Report, 1911, pp. 401 and 408, Tables A. and B.

generations of our youth, deprived of the opportunities of education during the formative years of life pass into adult population with irremediably stunted powers and narrowed outlooks, adversely affecting the whole quality of the national life.

As to industrial or scientific training, the thing scarcely exists. Our enforced ignorance closes the scientific departments of Government to us in large measure. Far worse, it makes us useless to our country for the development of her industrial and agricultural resources. We are exploited by European nations, and now also by Japan and America. We have become their milch-cow. Much of our wealth goes abroad. What is left imparts an air of prosperity to the professional and commercial classes. The real makers of the country's wealth-the peasant and the labourer-are steeped in poverty. The big capitalist and landowner are growing bigger. The small farmer, the *goyya*, who was the glory of Ceylon is fast becoming a landless vagabond and hireling,- this race of whom Robert Knox after living among them twenty years, said\* that the ordinary ploughman had the elegant speech and the elegant manner of the courtier.

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\* "An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon", 1681.

Of what other people in the world could this be said? Wide-spread and deep-rooted must have been the national culture, unlike the culture of modern nations, which seldom penetrates beneath the upper levels of society. "Take a ploughman from the plough, wash off his dirt, and he is fit to rule a kingdom," is the peasants' saying which Knox quotes. What superb self-confidence! What height might not such a people attain under the leadership of statesmen moving with the times! Then the Tamils who, with a civilisation going back to the days when they traded with Babylon and Egypt, have still some of the ancient vigour and keenness, and have largely contributed to the material and moral well-being of Ceylon; the Burghers whose example and influence have been invaluable in acclimatising Western knowledge and methods in the Island, and who have produced one of the greatest of our leaders and patriots, Charles Lorenz; the Moors with their simple, hardy lives and commercial aptitudes; and the Malay with his military instincts ;—what might not be done with such peoples under a proper system of education!

By a properly organized system of education our resources could be immensely developed. This has been done in agriculture by a small country like Denmark, and in industry as well as agriculture by

another small country, Switzerland. A Swiss statesman said: "Most of our children are born in poverty, but we take care that they shall not grow up in ignorance." With a population smaller than Ceylon, Switzerland spends more pounds sterling than we spend rupees on education, which is admirably organised from her primary schools to the seven Universities which attract students from all the world. The agricultural college at Copenhagen receives a yearly grant from the State of three-and-a-half lakhs of rupees, and there are twenty-one other agricultural schools for an agricultural population half that of Ceylon, to supply whose needs we have but one small school of recent date at Peradeniya. Switzerland and Denmark have by education so made up for the poverty of their natural resources that their trade is greater per head than that of Great Britain being respectively £23 4s. and £33 against £22 16s. for Great Britain.\* If our resources had been similarly developed, what prosperity and strength would be ours and at the service of Great Britain!

Take again Irrigation, a subject of vital importance to the vast majority of our population. Throughout twenty-four centuries rice cultivation was the principal concern of King and people and among the noblest of

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\* Whitaker's Almanack, 1917, p. 107.

callings. Kings themselves drove the plough. To construct and to maintain tanks and water-courses were deemed the wisest and most beneficent acts of a good ruler. "The plougher is the linch-pin of the world," said Tiruvalluvar of old; again, "however it whirl, the world followeth still the plougher's team." The French have a saying, "Pauvres paysans, pauvre royaume." Sismondi asked, when people were extolling the wonderful developments of manufacture and commerce in Europe last century, "What have you done with the peasants?" Having neglected agriculture, Britain to-day, in spite of her immense industrial and commercial wealth and power, finds in that neglect the chief source of her weakness and anxiety. Modern industrial nations are learning by painful experience how essential agriculture is to national power and even national existence. "Kingdoms many under the shade of his throne he will see, whose fields are shaded by the waving corn," sang Tiruvalluvar.

Irrigation received earnest and sympathetic attention from some Governors,-notably Sir Henry Ward, Sir William Gregory, Sir Arthur Gordon, Sir West Ridgeway. They recognized the duty of the State to provide facilities for the hundreds of thousands of persons dependent on agriculture and the necessity for growing our own food as of old and reducing our

dependence on India. But for some years past there has been a change of policy, unnoticed by the public or its leaders. An expert was imported from India at great expense, and after elaborate inquiries made a report which is understood to have been exhaustive and to disclose serious defects in the administration. The Report was never published. A Bill is now before the Legislative Council. It has taken nearly a decade to hatch, but shows little appreciation of the needs and conditions of agriculture. What a new day for Ceylon there might be, if we could but hope for such a Minister as Denmark found in her dark hour after the war of 1866 in Cla Hansen! Himself a peasant-farmer bedding his own cows each night after his ministerial duties were done and one of the greatest experts in Europe in cattle breeding and scientific milk-farming, he organized that splendid scheme of agricultural education and of co-operation among the working-farmers and between them and the national railway, canal and banking systems, which has made that little country what Lord Selborne called it the other day, "the leader of agriculture in the world."

Good or bad, when Government have once made up their minds on a measure, it can scarcely help passing unchanged in essence through the Legislative Council owing to the official majority in it, the very small

elective element and the ineffectiveness of the majority of the nominated members. The Legislative Council, as at present constituted, hardly answers a useful purpose. It provides, no doubt, seats of honour to a few unofficials and an arena for their eloquence or for their silence. But they are little more than advisory members, and their presence on this Council, as in lesser bodies-Municipal Councils, Local Boards, etc.,-serves to conceal the autocracy under which we live. Without the unofficial element and the semblance of popular representation, the sole responsibility of the officials would be patent. They would be more keenly alive to it; so would the Secretary of State, and he could hold them more strictly to account.

But the inherent defects of a Crown Colony administration will remain. It answers well enough so long as you have only to police a country, collect taxes, make roads, administer justice, etc. But much more is needed if Ceylon is to be a self-reliant, self-respecting-unit in the British Empire. Tied as we are to the apron strings of a bureaucracy and deprived of all power and responsibility, -our powers and capacities are dwarfed and stunted, we live in an atmosphere of inferiority, and we can never rise to the full height to which our manhood is capable of rising. We have 'hypnotised ourselves into thinking that we are weak and inferior.

No greater disaster can overtake a people. We must regain our self-confidence. We must feel that nothing can daunt us, nothing is beyond us.

The swaddling-clothes of a Crown Colony administration are strangling us. They have begun even to disturb the equanimity of our European fellow-subjects. Engrossed each in his business, looking forward to frequent trips home and to the time when the dust of Ceylon will be shaken off their feet, they ignored the duty present to earlier generations of their countrymen under the inspiration and leadership of such men as George Wall, remained indifferent to their responsibilities as citizens of Ceylon, and were rather pleased to see the Ceylonese "kept in his place." But none are safe until all are safe.

The discontent of our European friends is of good omen for the future, for we need their cooperation in reforming the administration. Its continuance is inconsistent with the great traditions of England. It is in having to do things that one learns how to do them and develops a sense of duty in regard to them. Denied the opportunity of training in governing ourselves even in the smallest matters, we are told that we are unfit for anything better than a paternal despotism. But time after time England has shown in her own history, as in



her dealings with dependent peoples, her staunch faith in the healing and ennobling power of popular institutions and has found in them the only sure remedy for the ills of the body-politic.

Hon'ble Mr. Sri Nivasa Sastri, Member of the Supreme Legislative Council of India and worthy successor of Mr. Gokhale in the office of President of the Servants of India Society, has done well in drawing prominent attention to this in his recent publication, *Self-government for India under the British Flag*. He has shown, for example, from official publication, how the French Canadians, at a stage of development, when according to every criterion now applied to India and Ceylon they were unfit for popular institutions, were on the advice of a far-sighted statesman granted full Responsible Government. Hear what Lord Durham says about their condition at the time: "The continued negligence of the British Government left the mass of the people without any of the institutions which would have elevated them in freedom and civilisation." "It is impossible to exaggerate the want of education among the inhabitants. They are almost entirely destitute of the qualifications even of reading and writing." "They possess neither municipal institutions nor popular initiative. Accustomed to rely entirely upon Government, they have no power to do anything for

themselves, much less to aid the central authority."  
"They have made little advance beyond the first progress in comfort which the bounty of the soil absolutely forced on them; under the same institutions they remained the same uninstructed, inactive and unprogressive people." "I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state. I found a struggle not of principles, but of races."

It was to such a people, and after they had risen in armed rebellion, that not merely representative institutions but Responsible Government was given. Eleven years afterwards, in 1849, the British Canadians had so little reconciled themselves to the change, that, when a Bill was passed giving compensation to innocent sufferers from the rebellion, the most violent opposition was organized, the Governor-General who gave his assent to the Bill was insulted, and the Parliament House at Montreal was burnt down. But the faith of Britain in Responsible Government as the solution of Colonial administration did not falter. It has been amply justified and rewarded. To-day Canada is among the most loyal, prosperous and progressive of His Majesty's dominions and a tower of strength in this terrible war. Like happy results have followed from a like policy in the Australian Colonies. The success of the policy has

been even more marked in South Africa, where the Boer, who fought the British fifteen years ago, is now fighting in defence of the British Empire.

The liberalising of our administration, therefore, in the direction of a representative and responsible government and of giving the people a real and effective share in the administration of the country, is in the best interests of the Empire no less than of Ceylon. But a bureaucracy is slow to part with power, especially when it believes itself to be exercising that power for good, slow also to believe that its wards have come of age. Nor can we expect hard-worked officials to think out these matters for us and to grant us these boons unasked. It is for us to meet and deliberate, to

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\* Mr. H. A. L. Fisher (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield and now Minister of Education in England) says: "It may be questioned whether a life spent in the Indian Civil Service is calculated, except in rare cases, to stimulate that prevision of political talent which consists in the study and guidance of political opinion or in the framing of large legislative measures from time to time needed in actively thinking political communities."

Nor are our officials encouraged to think beyond the task of the day. I have known men who worked out big schemes of far-reaching usefulness and spent years in trying to convert successive Governors and Colonial Secretaries, and when at last they were won over and even legislative sanction obtained, the accident of a change of Governor or Colonial Secretary has hurled the structure to the ground and brought to nought the labour of perhaps two decades. The Registration of Titles Ordinance No. 8 of 1907 is an example.

formulate a scheme, and to work strenuously and earnestly for its realization.

Circumstances have arisen which make it of the utmost importance that we should do so without delay. Now that the war is happily drawing to a close in an assured victory for the cause of our Sovereign, great changes in the political constitution of the Empire are on the point of being made which will affect us vitally. It is our duty as well as our interest to submit our views to the Imperial Government in time. Silence or delay may prove disastrous, and it may be our lot to exchange the benevolent, if sleepy, rule of Downing Street for the domination of the self-governing colonies, to have the stamp of an inferior race branded on our forehead, and to be victims of their ignorant prejudice and selfish greed.

In India vast numbers of the people have shown themselves alive to their duties and responsibilities as citizens and to the needs of the hour. By public discussion, by meetings and congresses, by memorials, by deputations to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, by permanent agencies in England, India has set an example and has achieved results which should rouse us from our apathy. Thanks to a well-organized and sustained campaign and to the wisdom of British

statesmen, the Legislative Councils of India, which were established thirty years after ours, have been so improved that they are largely elective and contain in every Legislative Council, except the Supreme Council of the Viceroy, an unofficial majority. The Executive Councils of the Viceroy and of the various Governors of Presidencies, and even the Council of the Secretary of State, contain one or more unofficial members. The country is dotted with Municipalities and other local bodies, urban and rural, mostly elective and presided over by unofficial Chairmen. The administration is amenable and sensitive to public opinion to a degree unknown in Ceylon. Yet India is not satisfied, and the National Indian Congress and the All-India Muslim League have joined in the demand presented to the Viceroy by nineteen members of his Council for further extension of power, in order to secure "not merely good government or efficient administration, but government that is acceptable to the people because it is responsible to them" and to make India occupy "a position not of subordination but of comradeship with England."

In Ceylon the Legislative Council contains a permanent official majority. Only four out of ten unofficial members are elected. Of the four, two represent the Europeans, who are a small minority of

our population and whose interests should be safe enough in the hands of the twelve official members who are all Europeans. There is not a single unofficial in the Executive Council. A seat in a Council of the Secretary of State has been beyond our wildest dreams. Municipalities were first established in Ceylon in 1865 in Colombo, Kandy and Galle. Though half-a-century has passed, neither their number nor their powers have been increased. The Councils remain practically departments of Government administered by officials of the Civil Service, with councillors who have little more than consultative powers; while the city of Bombay, with many times the population and revenue of Colombo, has for years had an elected Chairman and fifty-six elected to sixteen members (official and unofficial) nominated by Government. Local Boards, established in 1876, remain equally ineffective for the purpose of training people in the art of managing their affairs, and still more the Sanitary Boards established under the Ordinance 18 of 1892. The ancient system of Village Councils was revived in 1871 with the declared intention of restoring to the people the administration of village affairs. But so little has this intention been carried out, that the elective system provided for by law has become a farce, elections are seldom notified, and the councillors are

usually nominees of the District Mudaliyar and carry out his orders. On the judicial side these councils have been allowed to degenerate into petty police courts without their safeguards, and the idea of the village court has so far been lost sight of that the proceedings are recorded in English, a language unknown to the suitors.

There has thus been no real attempt to train the people in self-government, and we have fallen far behind even India.\* A bitter commentary on the expectations of the Royal Commissioners on whose recommendation our political and judicial system was organized in 1833: *"The peculiar circumstances of Ceylon, both physical and moral, seem, to point it out to the British Government as the fittest spot in our Eastern dominions in which to plant the germ of European civilisation, whence we may not unreasonably hope that it will hereafter spread over the whole of those vast territories."*

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\* In point of literacy the population of Ceylon is ahead of India. At the Census of 1911 the proportion of literates per 1,000 in Ceylon was for males 404 against 106 in India; and for females 106 in Ceylon against 10 in India (Ceylon Census Report, 1911, p. 428, Table M). Not much for us to boast of, our population is so small, 4<sup>1/4</sup> millions against over 300 in India.

† Report of Royal Commissioners, 31st January, 1832, *Ramanathan's Law Reports*, 1820-33, page 274.

There is, however, no lack of criticism of our incapacity and want of initiative very much as the Canadians were criticised and condemned in the last century. Yet the Blue Book figures quoted above, and facts patent to every unprejudiced person, show that we are fitter for representative institutions than Canada was at the time she was granted Responsible Government. If the Philippines with a heterogeneous population (Malay, Chinese, Spanish, Negro and hybrid; Mohammedan, Christian, Buddhist and animist; tree-dweller, head-hunter, and cannibal), a population neglected through three centuries of Spanish misrule, can be so elevated by the rule of the United States as to be fit within a decade for an Upper House of eight Commissioners (four Americans and four Philipinos) under the presidency of the American Governor-General and a Legislative Assembly of eighty-one elected members, an elected Governor for each of its 38 provinces, and elected Presidents and Councillors for its 730 towns -an administration changed last October, within another decade, to full self-government with promise of independence in the near future-, to say that Ceylon, the home of an ancient civilisation, is after more than a hundred years of British Rule fit for nothing better than Crown Colony administration is absurd and, if



true, would be discreditable to the British administration. But it is not true.

Most of the reform schemes and discussions that I have seen begin and end with the Most of the reform schemes and discussions that I have seen begin and end with the Legislative Council. This, no doubt, is important, as also the reform of the Executive Council. But of far greater importance is the improvement of the rural and urban administration. A thorough reform of this system will enable us to share in the actual administration of the country and to train bur people to self-government on a wider scale. Our Village Committees, of which there are now about three hundred, should be increased in number and spread far and wide over the Island. They should be elective in fact as they are in name, and should share with the District Mudaliyar, and later have exclusive control of the administration of the village affairs-schools and sanitation, roads and canals, irrigation, agriculture, fisheries, etc. The village headman should not be a nominee of the Mudaliyar or the Government Agent but should be elected by the villagers, as they were found to be even so late as 1831 by the Royal Commissioners, who recommended the continuance of this old custom and that the office should be subject

to renewal every three years.\* The Assistant Government Agent should have a District Council mostly elected, to share with him the administration of all matters affecting his district and to absorb the functions: which now dissipate the energies of Road Committees, Education and Excise Committees and other bodies and of the Police, Excise, Irrigation, Postal and other departments. The Government Agent should have a similar Provincial Council for all matters affecting the province, until in due course the administration is transferred to Provincial and District Councils presided over by elected officers.

The Municipalities and Local Boards should have, as usual in India, an elected majority and elected Chairmen, and should have their own Bench of Magistrates to deal with Municipal and local offences. The Sanitary Boards, of which there are about a hundred and containing only nominees of Government, should be multiplied and consist mainly of elected members and have elected Chairmen. As the Government of India said in their Resolution of 18th May, 1882: "There appears to the Governor-General in Council to be great force in the argument that so long as the chief Executive Officers are, as a

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\* Report of Royal Commissioners, pp. 227-8.

matter of course, Chairmen of the Municipal and District Committees, there is little chance of these Committees affording any effective training to their members in the management of local affairs, or of the nonofficial members taking any real interest in local business. The non-official members must be led to feel that real power is placed in their hands and that they have real responsibility to discharge. It is doubtful whether they have, under the present arrangement, any sufficient inducement to give up their time and attention to the transaction of public business." "The true principle to be followed," in the opinion of the Government of India, "is that the control should be exercised from without rather than from within."<sup>†</sup>

Extension of Local Self-Government on these lines will be a valuable education to the people. It would give every man a share in the power, which under our native sovereigns he had, of guidance over the things which he understands, beginning with the small and simple interests of his village, and would train him anew in habits of co-operation for public purposes and

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\* Resolution of the Governor-General in Council, during the Viceroyalty of the Marquis of Ripon, on Local Self-government, 1882: Indian Constitution, by A. Rangaswamy Aiyangar, Appendix, p cxii., para.18.

† Ibid. p. cxii., para. 17.

in Western methods. It would find an outlet for energies now wasted among the masses in idleness, or misused in feuds and litigation, drink and crime. It would enlist in the service of the community and turn to good account the intelligence and public spirit of the large educated class whom it is bad policy as well as sheer waste of power not to utilize. It would lighten the growing burden of administration on British officials and stop the clamour for increased establishments. It would provide Government Agents and Assistant Government Agents (until, as in the Philippines, they are replaced by elected officers) with trustworthy channels of information and advice other than the headmen. It would check the notorious abuses of the Headman system, the odium of which falls on Government in spite of all its efforts to grapple with them, -a Sisyphean labour. It would rescue the efficient Civil Servant from the pitiful drudgery which wastes his abilities, narrows his outlook and cripples his usefulness. It would leave him time and opportunity to consider and devise large measures of public policy and to carry them out with the co-operation of the people, no longer an autocrat and taskmaster, but in the finer role of guide, colleague and friend. It would convert idle spectators and carping critics of the administration into men with interest in, and

responsibility for, good government and with experience of its difficulties, would promote self-confidence and self-respect, breathe new life into the people and gain for them dignity at home and abroad.

The local administration will thus be greatly improved and benefited. Even if at first there is no improvement, and even though mistakes will be committed, it must be remembered that only through such mistakes can experience be gained and progress made, while no serious harm can result, as the central authority will retain the power to interfere in case of gross abuse. "It is not primarily," says the Government of India, "with a view to improvement in administration that this measure (of local self-government) is put forward and supported. It is chiefly desirable as an instrument of political and popular education. His Excellency in Council has himself no doubt that in course of time, as local knowledge and focal interest are brought to bear more freely upon local administration, improved efficiency will in fact follow. But, at starting, there will doubtless be many failures, calculated to discourage exaggerated hopes and even in some cases to cast apparent discredit upon the practice of self-government itself. If, however, the officers of Government only set themselves, as the Governor-General in Council believes they will, to foster

sedulously the small beginnings of independent political life, if they accept loyally and as their own the policy of the Government and if they come to realize that the system really opens

to them a fairer field for the exercise of administrative tact and directive energy than the more autocratic system which it supersedes, then it may be hoped that the period of failure will be short, and that real and substantial progress will very soon become manifest."\*

The chief concern of the local administration should be the spread, far and wide, of education, for it is the root of national life and progress. Education should be free, both elementary and secondary, vernacular and English, industrial and scientific. There is a great deal of leeway to be made up. Instead of a paltry four or five per cent. of our revenue we must spend at least thirty per cent., as the Philippine Government has done. An American administrator, explaining the policy of the United States in the Philippines, said: "We stake our whole job on the education of the

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\* Indian Constitution, by A. Rangaswamy Aiyangar, p. cvii., para. 5.

people.\* Let us take the United States, Japan<sup>†</sup>, France, and among (the smaller States) Scotland,<sup>‡</sup> Switzerland

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\* The actual expenditure on education in the Philippines is seven million dollars out of a revenue of twenty-two million dollars or 31.8 per cent. The expenditure in the U. S. A. itself is 20 per cent. of the State revenue and 80 per cent. of the local taxation. The rate of illiteracy in the U. S. A. is 7.7 per cent., inclusive of Negroes and immigrants.

† Japan has in 40 years reduced her rate of illiteracy to zero, the whole of her child population of six and a half millions, male and female, between 6 and 14 years, being under instruction in over 26,000 schools. For secondary and higher education there are 303 middle schools, 177 high girls' schools, 78 normal schools, 5,682 special and technical schools, 3,128 other schools, and four Universities. The Tokyo University (says the English scientific journal, *Nature*, envious of the opportunities enjoyed by Japanese students), a generation ago a high-class school, is now (July, 1915) a highly organised University where scientific research lives and thrives. It consists of six colleges law, medicine, engineering, literature, science, agriculture; employs close on 400 professors, assistant professors and lecturers. Among the science professors are included 4 in mathematics, 3 physics, 2 theoretical physics, 4 chemistry, 3 geology, 2 botany, 2 geology, 1 each in mineralogy, geography, seismology, anthropology. The Technological Institute in Tokyo is probably without a rival in the world.

‡ In Scotland, which is the best educated portion of the British Isles, education, elementary and secondary, is so wide-spread and higher education so well provided for, that one boy in four goes to the University. No wonder that, in every part of the Empire, Scotsmen hold a position quite out of proportion to their population. Education is taken more seriously in Scotland than England. The Bishop of Birmingham, speaking some time ago in the House of Lords, deplored the fact that Oxford and Cambridge were far too much merely plutocratic playgrounds. "The plain and present fact," said Mr. G. K. Chesterton commenting on the Bishop's statement, "is that our upper classes regard the University as a lark." It is interesting to note, as evidence of educational keenness in a self-governing Colony, that the

and Denmark for our model and organize a system of education that shall, from the primary school to the University, be within the reach of every child. This vital question will, I am convinced, never be solved until the administration is in our hands.

With Local Self-Government properly developed we should, in the course of a few years, have all over the Island men conversant with the details of rural and urban life and experienced in administration and able to take their part efficiently in the bigger affairs of Government that are dealt with by the Executive and Legislative Councils. Side by side with the improvement of local administration, we must reform these Councils, too, having for our goal a time, not, I hope, far distant, when we shall have the fullest control over the affairs of Ceylon within the Empire, have the same powers and privileges as Australia, Canada or little Newfoundland, and like them take our place in an Imperial scheme of federation as comrades, not dependents, of Great Britain.

We ought to have at once a large increase in the number of elected members of the Legislative Council. While the general principle should be local

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State of Western Australia has an absolutely free University at Perth, probably the only free University in the Empire.



representation, there must be adequate safeguards for minorities. The Burghers, for example, the Europeans and the Mohammedans should have special electorates. Municipalities, Local and Sanitary Boards, Provincial and District Councils should have their elected representatives, also the commercial and planting interests and the learned professions. The Governor should, for some time, have the power of nominating a limited number of unofficials to represent interests that may be left unrepresented at the elections. But the elected members should have a clear majority. As the Secretary of State for India said in the House of Lords, when explaining his reason for dispensing with the official majority: "An official majority directly, palpably and injuriously tends to deaden the interest and responsibility of nonofficial members."

The Executive Council should include two unofficials. An old colonist, Mr. John Ferguson, in his *Ceylon in the Jubilee Year*, says: "The farce has been seen even in recent years of a Governor and his five Executive advisors in Ceylon not counting half-a-dozen years of local experience between them." That great Governor, Sir West Ridgeway, saw the danger of it. In May, 1903, he recommended to the Secretary of State the appointment of two unofficials to the Executive

Council, as "tending to satisfy public opinion which is in favour of more effective representation in the Government of the Colony," and as "it would formally place at the disposal of the Government advice and information which it is not always possible to obtain from official sources." He was over-ruled by the Secretary of State. How invaluable would such information and advice have been in May and June, 1915! Two members have, indeed, been added to the Executive Council since Sir West Ridgeway's time, but both officials. The addition has not improved the Council, but rather the reverse. The additional members are the chief administrative officers in the Island, whose acts it is the duty of the Council to supervise and sit in judgment on.

The details of the Constitution and Franchise of the new Legislative Council will have to be worked out. At present there are twenty-one members, besides the presiding Governor: in all 12 officials and 10 unofficials, of whom 4 are elected and 6 nominees of the Governor. I should be disposed to raise the whole number to at least thirty-two, of whom eighteen to be elected and fourteen nominated (11 officials and 3 unofficials). Nothing is gained by increasing the number of officials. It was my experience when I was an official member of the Legislative Council, and it is

the experience of others, that attendance at the Council interfered with our duties as Heads of Departments. It is hardly seemly and almost humiliating to be there mainly to say ditto to the spokesman of Government. A certain number of official members must, no doubt, be on the Council to serve on Committees and help the Government and the unofficial members with information, advice, etc. But this number should be reduced to a minimum to avoid the dislocation of public business outside the Council. Other officers can always be consulted without being given seats in the Council. An official majority is not indispensable to Government. The Secretary of State for India said in his Despatch of 27th November, 1908. "With a Council representing divergent interests and realizing, together with its increased powers, greater responsibility, a combination of all the non-official members to resist a measure proposed by Government would be unlikely, and some non-officials at least would probably cast their votes on the side of Government. If, however, a combination of all the non-official members against the Government were to occur, that might be a very good reason for thinking that the proposed measure was really open to objection and should not be

proceeded with.\* Should the nonofficial majority press legislation of a character disapproved by Government, the Secretary of State was of opinion that it should be met by the exercise of the power to withhold assent possessed by the Head of the Government.

I would further, in accordance with the recommendation of the Royal Commission of 1831, provide that the Governor should take no part in the deliberations of the Council. Free discussion is as the Commission anticipated and as experience has shown, impeded by his Presence, especially as the great majority of the members owe their appointments and their continuance therein to him. When the discussion is free, it sometimes puts him in an awkward position. Mr. William Digby in his *Forty Years in a Crown Colony* (Volume II., page 189) says: "It is lowering to the dignity of the Queen's representative to take part in the often rough give-and-take style of oratory of such institutions. Mixing in petty matters the Vice regal office is not raised in esteem. Governors are but men, and they naturally take much interest in measures for which they are responsible. Among the traditions of the present House (1875) is one which tells of a

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\* Lord Morley's Despatch of 27th November, 1908 (p. lxxvii. of Appendix to A. Rangaswamy Aiyangar's *Indian Constitution*.)

Governor, highly offended at persistent opposition to a Government Bill, deliberately turning his chair round and sitting with his back to an Honourable Member during the whole time that he was speaking. Further, the same President became very wroth, broke the rules of the House in regard to the Bill, and was only restored to his wonted composure by asking the senior member temporarily to occupy the chair, while he went to one of the open windows and watched some military sports being carried out on a *maidan* near." In the last House (1912) an unofficial member came into conflict with the Governor and was nearly expelled.

The reform of the Civil Service is no less urgent. It should be recruited on the judicial side almost exclusively from the Bar. Competent men should be selected by a Board on which the judges of the Supreme Court have a predominant voice, and, having served a period of probation, should be drafted permanently into the service with prospects of rising to the highest class. The highest judicial and legal appointments, including the Chief Justiceship and the Attorney-Generalship, should be open as a matter of course to the leaders of the Bar and the existing barriers of race-prejudice swept away. On the administrative side the facilities for the admission and advancement of the Ceylonese should be greatly

extended. Throughout the public service efficiency and character should be the tests. The employment of Europeans should gradually be reduced to cases of clear necessity. Only Europeans of outstanding ability and merit should be appointed, and they should be well paid. Men like the late Chief Justice Sir John Phear and the late Sir Alexander Ashmore and Mr. F. C. Fisher of the Civil Service were worth to the Island double and treble their pay.

"In countries like India and Egypt," says that great administrator whom the Empire has just lost, Earl Cromer, in *Modern Egypt*, the best policy to pursue is to employ a small body of well-selected and well-paid Europeans. Everything depends on finding the right man for the right place. If he can be found, it is worthwhile to pay him well. It is a mistake to employ second or third-rate Europeans on low salaries. They often do more harm than good." In India and Ceylon second and third-rate Europeans are employed, on salaries by no means low, in posts, many of which can be quite as efficiently, if not more efficiently, filled by indigenous talent. These countries have long ceased to attract first-class men except occasionally. Where there is free competition, as in the professions of Law and Medicine, Indians and Ceylonese have easily distanced European rivals. In the Bar of the

Presidency towns of India as well as of Colombo, European barristers are few and far between; in Madras and Calcutta they are rare even in the highest legal offices. In the Medical profession Ceylon has produced men of European reputation, and there is scarcely a European physician or surgeon here or in India who commands the confidence and prestige that the best of our doctors do. In the Civil Service itself many Ceylonese have, in spite of heavy handicaps, gained distinction. If they have not done so in the purely technical departments, it is mainly because they have been denied the opportunity. The Government should give them every facility of training (if necessary, abroad) in order to qualify themselves and, as vacancies arise, should replace Europeans by Ceylonese. Any other policy would savour of the spirit of that M. P. who was so little in harmony with British ideals and traditions as to maintain that India (and the Crown Colonies). existed mainly to provide markets for British goods and places for British boys.

The number of high appointments held by Ceylonese is lamentably low. Of 44 appointments in the Civil Service of the annual value of £900 to £2,000 only three are held by Ceylonese (including Burghers), a proportion of barely 7 per cent., the highest among them drawing £1,150. (I take the figures throughout

from the *Ceylon Civil List*, 1916). In the Treasury, out of three officers (£400 to £700) - leaving out the Treasurer who is a European Civil Servant-not one is a Ceylonese; nor in the Audit Office out of three officers (£500 to £1,000). In the Public Works Department, out of 10 Provincial Engineers only 'one is a Ceylonese; of the 12 officers in the Headquarters' Staff and Government Factory (£300 to £1,400), not one is a Ceylonese. Among- the District Engineers (£300 to £600), 19 out of 60 are Ceylonese. In the Survey Department, which during the 117 years of its existence has for some occult reason been a European sanctuary, out of 21 appointments of the value of £500 to £1,200, not one is held by a Ceylonese; of 10 Assistant Superintendents (£300 to £500), but 2 are Ceylonese; and-a striking proof of the persistence of a bad policy-out of 18 probationers (£300 to £325) not one is a Ceylonese. The Forest Department and the Irrigation Department, though of recent origin, follow the very bad example of the Survey Department. Out of 11 appointments in the Forest Department (£350 to £1,100) and 21 appointments in the Irrigation Department (£300 to £1,200), not one is held by a Ceylonese. Of the 11 former offices, five are held by Europeans, locally selected and after some years' service sent abroad to be out of 10 Provincial



Engineers only 'one is a Ceylonese; of the 12 officers in the Headquarters' Staff and Government Factory (£300 to £1,400), not one is a Ceylonese. Among- the District Engineers (£300 to £600), 19 out of 60 are Ceylonese. In the Survey Department, which during the 117 years of its existence has for some occult reason been a European sanctuary, out of 21 appointments of the value of £500 to £1,200, not one is held by a Ceylonese; of 10 Assistant Superintendents (£300 to £500) , but 2 are Ceylonese; and-a striking proof of the persistence of a bad policy-out of 18 probationers (£300 to £325) not one is a Ceylonese. The Forest Department and the Irrigation Department, though of recent origin, follow the very bad example of the Survey Department. Out of 11 appointments in the Forest Department (£350 to £1,100) and 21 appointments in the Irrigation Department (£300 to £1,200), not one is held by a Ceylonese. Of the 11 former offices, five are held by Europeans, locally selected and after some years' service sent abroad to be trained at the public expense. Why our own youth should not have been given these facilities, is a mystery. In the Railway Department, but of 14 officers (£500 to £1,400), not one is a Ceylonese; out of 18 officers (£300 to £400), two are Ceylonese. In the Police Department, out of five officers (£550 to

£1,200) only one is a Ceylonese; and of 16 officers (£350 to £500) four. Seven others- all Europeans-are shown as temporarily appointed (£225 to £800), and among these is one of the officers laboriously trained for the Forest Department at public expense. The Police authorities are apparently not satisfied. Recently they have been issuing more invitations to European planters to offer themselves for appointments. In the Postal and Telegraph Department, out of 13 appointments of the value of £300 to £900 (other than the Postmaster-General who is a European Civil Servant) only 4 of the lower appointments are held by Ceylonese. It is superfluous to go on to other departments. Enough has been said to show the extent to which Ceylonese are excluded from the higher appointments. One has only to O'O over the way to Mysore, a great Indian State: administered from top to bottom by Indians, to see that the administration has not gone to rack and ruin by the pursuit of a different policy. On the contrary, you will find the administration highly efficient. You will see an enlightened ruler working through Indian ministers in the highest offices, through provincial Governors with jurisdiction and responsibility at least as large as our Civil Servants, with engineers executing works not less

important than in Ceylon, and every department run by Indians.

This is not a question of loaves and fishes. A just distribution of places of honour and emolument in the community is the mark of a wise ruler, as by satisfying legitimate ambitions it largely contributes to the contentment of the people. We claim the right to take full part and to gain full experience in every branch of the administration. The experience and knowledge gained in the higher branches of the Public Service is carried away by every retiring European official and is absolutely lost to Ceylon to its great detriment, its administration being perpetually in the hands of newcomers. If the Ceylonese were largely employed in the higher posts in all departments, an accumulating wealth of precious experience would remain in the Island and bear fruit in the training of younger generations, in the counselling of the powers-that-be, in the guiding of public discussions and measures, in the maintenance of a continuity of policy, and generally in the advancement of good government. What would the administration of Great Britain be like if, say, all its experienced officers over the age of fifty-five were sent away from the country and the administration was left in the hands of a perpetually shifting generation of new men? What, if those men

were strangers to the country, knew the English language but slightly, knew less of English history and traditions, kept aloof from the people except during business hours, felt themselves in exile while they lived in England, and looked forward to furlough at frequent intervals and to quitting the scene of their labours for good at the earliest pensionable age?

Unless we have at once an effective share in and control of the administration, I see no prospect of quickening its snail-like progress and of securing early the numerous measures vital to our welfare. While we claim to exercise the rights and duties of British citizenship, we should bear in mind that the fundamental requirement of that citizenship is the right and duty of fighting in defence of our King and Country. We should deem it a high privilege to do so, nor indeed can national character be duly developed except by the discharge of the duty. We ought, therefore, to welcome compulsory military service in the Island, and to demand that we should be trained for it, so that Ceylon might no longer be dependent on English or Indian regiments for its defence. It is many years since a British regiment was stationed here. The last Indian regiment has made way for our own Volunteers. British or Indian regiments will be less and less available with the increasing strain of the Empire

on Great Britain. Nor is it right that we should add to her burdens by our helplessness. The splendid stand that the Sinhalese made against Europeans for three centuries, until they voluntarily surrendered the Island to the British Sovereign with full reservation of their rights and liberties, is a matter of history. The Tamils formed the bulk of the army which helped Lord Clive to conquer India. Though, like the Sinhalese, they have been obliged to turn to peaceful pursuits, Tamils drawn from the class of rickshaw-wallas and coolies have fought splendidly in the present war, as the *Ceylon Times* recently pointed out.

In regard also to the defence of our seas, which has of late had to be shared with Japan, we must give relief to England by seeking service in the Navy and qualifying ourselves. When the Indian Ocean was infested by the Arabs, then sharing the maritime supremacy of the world with Venice, Ibn Batuta, travelling from Tangiers, found (1347 A.D.) the Ceylon seas protected by the Navy of Arya Chakravarti of Jaffna, under whose protection he made his pilgrimage to Adam's Peak and travelled over a great part of Ceylon. Sixty years later another king- of that line sent a great army by sea and land against Kotte and Gampola. Two centuries earlier Parakrama Bahu the Great not only held the command of the sea, but carried his victorious

Standards to South India, Siam and Cambodia. With proper training in modern methods our men will prove no less effective for the present and future defence of Ceylon. Japan has shown that, given equal opportunity, Asiatics are in no way inferior to Europeans in any branch of human activity, civil, military, or naval, scientific, industrial or commercial.

Our immediate concern, however, is with the civil administration. I have given in bare outline the reforms which I submit for your consideration as worthy of your immediate attention. But to achieve success we must be prepared to work strenuously and systematically. It is not enough to hold spasmodic meetings, make long speeches and go to sleep. Let us have a minimum of talk and maximum of action—well weighed and resolutely persisted in. Let us have an earnest body of men to form a "CEYLON REFORM LEAGUE," with a good working Secretary and Committee, a competent staff, a central office, a reading room and library and a place for us to meet daily and exchange thoughts and help to maintain each other's enthusiasm. This central office should be the brain of an organization extending over the Island and by means of branches and affiliated societies in every town and district, by means of lectures and publications, carrying on a propaganda for educating

the people in their rights and duties as citizens. We shall need competent agents in England to keep the claims and needs of Ceylon before the British Government and public. All this requires money as well as zeal. It will be necessary to raise a fund to which, I trust, our wealthy men will make liberal contributions. There should be a subscription of, say, Rs. 10 a month to meet current expenses which will be heavy. Persons able and willing to help the cause by personal service, but unable to pay this subscription, might be admitted by the Committee as members on reduced subscription or without subscription during such service.

Work, work, work must be our motto, work on constitutional lines, with loyalty to our Sovereign, with disciplined efficiency, tenacity and enthusiasm. On us alone depends success or failure. Nobody else can help us. Think of what Japan has achieved. The whole system of government and administration of Japan was revolutionized by 32 young men-no more. They held aloft new national ideals and broke the conceptions of control derived from the days of chain armour. They were all obscure, without official rank, social distinction or influence. Our task is lighter, because, in spite of the vagaries of individuals here and there, England is a free nation, no nation greater and nobler

than she in her age-long assertion of liberty, no warmer champion of small nations; to her fugitives of liberty all over the world have come and found an asylum; all her traditions, ideals and instincts, her imperial policy declared through responsible statesmen and the Sovereign himself, are on our side. We have only to convince her that we are in earnest, and our wishes will be granted. But let us lose no time. The Imperial Federation Scheme will soon be under discussion, and our fate may be decided before many months are over. If we organize at once and submit our views in time, we must succeed, for the moment is propitious. Failure should only be a spur and an incitement to us to renewed and more intense effort until we reach our goal.

Meanwhile, I would like to recall to our British fellow-subjects, official and unofficial, the words of a great Englishman breathing the true English spirit. Macaulay said of India, and every word of his applies to Ceylon :-"We are free, we are civilized, to little purpose, if we grudge to any portion of the human race an equal measure of freedom and civilization. Are we to keep the people of India ignorant in order that we may keep them submissive? Or do we think that we can give them knowledge without awakening ambition? Or do we mean to awaken ambition and to provide it with no



legitimate vent? Who will answer any of these questions in the affirmative? .....The path of duty is plain before us, and it is also the path of wisdom, of national prosperity, national honour." "It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown the system; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that, having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come, I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or to retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history. The sceptre may pass away from us. Unforeseen accidents may derange our most profound schemes of policy. Victory may be inconstant to our arms. But there are triumphs which are followed by no reverses. There is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. These triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism, that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws."

That the same spirit animates British statesmen still, is clear from the address of Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, on the occasion of a farewell dinner given him by the United Services at the United Services Club, Simla:- "England has instilled into this country the

culture and civilization of the West with all its ideals of liberty and self-respect. It is not enough for her now to consider only the material outlook of India. It is necessary for her to cherish the aspirations of which she has herself sown the seed, and the English officials are gradually awakening to the fact that, high as were the aims and remarkable the achievements of their predecessors, a still nobler task lies before them in the present and the future in guiding the uncertain and faltering steps of Indian development along sure and safe paths. The new role of guide, philosopher and friend is opening before you, and it is worthy of our greatest efforts. It requires in you gifts of imagination and sympathy and imposes upon you self-sacrifice, for it means that slowly but surely you must divest yourselves of some of the power you have hitherto wielded. Let it be realised that great as has been England's mission in the past, she has a far more glorious task to fulfil in the future in encouraging- and guiding the political self-development of the people. The goal to which India may attain is still distant and there may be many vicissitudes in her path, but I look forward with confidence to a time when, strengthened by character and self-respect and bound by ties of affection and gratitude, India may be regarded as a true friend of the Empire and not merely as a trusty

dependent. The day for the complete fulfilment of this ideal is not yet, but it is to this distant vista that the British official should turn his eyes, and he must grasp the fact that it is by his future success in this direction that British prestige and efficiency will be judged."

May this spirit guide and animate our own officials! However, let us have the courage of our conviction, courage which Plutarch defined as "being resolutely minded in a just cause." When we know what we want and desire it determinedly and work for it strenuously, we must obtain our object. We seek to help in the realization of the conception of the British realm as a sisterhood of free nations. We ask to be in our own country what other self-respecting peoples are in theirs self-governing, strong, respected at home and abroad; and we ask for the grant at once of a definite measure of progressive advance towards that goal. Ceylon is no pauper begging for alms. She is claiming her heritage. The unity and solidarity of the Empire itself will become a real, living fact when it is based on and derives its strength from the most complete local autonomy and respect for the rights and privileges of all its subjects.

The London *Times*, in the course of a leading article reviewing Lord Hardinge's Viceroyalty, said last April:

"Lord Hardinge, speaking at Madras in November, 1913, of the treatment of Indian emigrants in South Africa and of their passive resistance to laws which they considered invidious and unjust, said: "In all this they have the sympathy of India-deep and burning and not only of India, but of all those who like myself, without being Indians themselves, have feelings of sympathy for the people of this country." He touched the hearts of the people and thenceforth they trusted him implicitly. Other Viceroys had fought for the financial and administrative rights of India, but here was a Viceroy who was willing to champion in all sincerity the rights of the people themselves. A great new principle lay behind this simple speech. Whatever form the relations between Great Britain and India may eventually assume, it is reasonably certain that future Viceroys and future Governments of India must more and more identify themselves with Indian interests, even though they seem to conflict at times with the policy of the Home Government. They must be truly Indian Governments, which implies some change of spirit and outward attitude. It also implies a gradual lessening of Whitehall control. The whole secret of his great influence is that it was instinctively felt that he was the forerunner of some such change."

So do we in Ceylon desire that our Government shall be a Ceylonese Government, that our rulers shall identify themselves entirely with Ceylonese interests and, in the striking words of the *Mahawansa*, “be one with the people.”

### III. Constitutional Reforms I

*[At a Conference on Constitutional Reforms convened by the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association and held at the Victoria Masonic Hall on Saturday, 15th December, 1917, in the presence of 144 Delegates from all parts of the Island, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, who was unanimously elected to the chair, delivered the following Presidential Address]*

I thank you for the honour you have done me by electing me Chairman. On behalf of the Ceylon Reform League and National Association, I offer a hearty welcome to the Associations and the gentlemen who have accepted our invitation to take part in the Conference. You have assembled in large numbers, many of you travelling great distances and at much personal inconvenience, and all animated by a spirit worthy of the occasion. It is an event of unique interest. This is probably the first Political Conference which

has met in Ceylon for at least a hundred years and will be a landmark in the history of the Island.

You may remember the words of Lord Macaulay. He spoke of India but his words apply equally to Ceylon:-

"It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown the system, that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government, that having become instructed in European knowledge they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history."

That day has come. In fact it came at least ten years ago, when our people demanded very much what they are now demanding. But the reactionary Government, then at the head of affairs in Ceylon, defeated our wishes and the intentions of a sympathetic Secretary of State. We are now fortunate in having a liberal-minded and sympathetic Governor. He has seen the tragic blunders and inefficiency of our officials and is doing his best to heal the wounds and restore the impaired confidence of the people.

A few weeks ago, the *Ceylon Times* urged as an objection for our claims

"the rumours in connection with the anchylostomiasis campaign, that the Government has set out to kill and exterminate all the children in the country, which resulted in the parents withdrawing their children from school in many districts."

I had not heard of these rumours. But assuming the *Times'* report to be correct, it would only show that since those disastrous mistakes there are people in this Island who are prepared to believe anything about the officials. Certainly before 1915 there was no readiness to think evil of them. On the contrary, there was a real and deep-rooted confidence in their good intentions and good work. How shall His Majesty the King reward those who have shattered the structure of confidence, sympathy, and affection built by the patient efforts of generations of his servants?

I said, we were fortunate in our present Governor, whose clear vision and courage have seen these flaws and will remedy them. We are fortunate, also in that the people and Government of Great Britain are more than ever dominated by the spirit of liberty and democracy and by the determination that all peoples

shall have the fullest opportunities of self-development on national lines. The changed angle of vision is manifest even in the writings of the *Ceylon Times*, an organ by no means favourable to our cause. In a leading article on the 1st of this month, the *Times* said:-

“That considerable changes will be made sooner or later, there can be no reasonable doubt, whether the people of this country, taking them as a whole, desire such changes or not. One of the avowed ends of our colonial policy being, rightly or wrongly, to encourage the progress in the direction of ultimate self-government, the Colonial Office is likely to see that the people of this and other Colonies are set on the path of political development, whether they wish it or not.”

The time is therefore auspicious, and it is our duty to see that our wishes and views are clearly and unmistakably placed before His Excellency the Governor and the Imperial Government to help them to a right decision and to win for ourselves as large a measure of constitutional reform as possible. To those people who, like the *Ceylon Observer* and Mr. Francis Beven, are urging the War as a reason why we should make no move, it is enough to recall what Lord Curzon said quite recently to his fellow-peers in the



House of Lords in reply to similar objections in regard to India. He said it was idle to make the War an excuse for not raising such questions as the administration of India. His warning with regard to the forces that the War had unchained and the repercussion of new ideas fairly startled them. He was emphatic that the Government of India was right to discuss the question of constitutional reform *now*. So it is for us in Ceylon.

We are not so foolish as to think that, with the granting of our wishes, even if responsible government were conceded to us at once, the millennium would come. It may be that our own administration may not prove more efficient, may prove even less so, though, I think, it will be hard to beat the inefficiency which culminated in the blunders of 1915. But, in the memorable words of Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman, "Good government can never be a substitute for government by the people themselves." We shall certainly never learn how to manage our affairs if we are always kept in leading strings.

We are not unused to representative institutions. Maine and other historians recognise the fact that democratic institutions spread from India to Europe with the immigration of Aryan peoples. Lord Metcalfe,

Governor-General of India, said to a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1832:-

"The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they can want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last when nothing else lasts. Dynasty follows dynasty, revolution succeeds revolution. Hindu, Pathan, Moghul, Mahratta, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn. But the village community remains the same."

In Ceylon itself every village (*gama*) had its Council (*gansabhawa*) for the administration of its affairs. The Village Council has survived through its vicissitudes of twenty-four centuries, and is part of our modern constitution, though, alas! sadly crippled by official control. In England village councils, under the name of Parish Councils, were created only in 1894 by the Local Government Act of that year. If you go to Sea Street in this City, you will find the Nattu-Kottai merchants administering their affairs, involving in value many hundreds thousands of rupees, by a democratic institution called the *Nagaram*-"The City"-which is the linear descendant of representative institutions over 2,000 years old.

In the 5th century B.C. the Capital city of Anuradhapura had a fairly complete and efficient municipal organisation, giving evidence of no mean administrative capacity as well as sanitary knowledge, and presided over by a Mayor of the city, *Nagara gittika*. "From that time," says our ancient chronicle, the *Mahawansa*, "there have been Nagara guttikas in the capital." Every Village Council sent its delegates to the District Council (*Rata sabhawa*), which continued to exist within living memory. Above these stood the Supreme Council of the Ministers of State, and the King who was considered the elected Supreme Magistrate. The form of election of the King was gone through, even in the most reactionary times, and down to the last of Ceylon's kings a hundred years ago. All this system,-the continuance of which (but with the substitution of the King of Great Britain for King Sri Wickrama Raja Sinha) was pledged to the people of Ceylon at the Great Convention of 1815 at Kandy ,-- disappeared under the rough and ready rule of officials, well-meaning but ignorant of local conditions and history, careless of popular sentiment and tradition, impatient of everything that seemed to conflict with their notions of what was right and proper. It was different with the early generation of British officials. In 1809 Sir Alexander Johnston,

Chief Justice and First Member of the King's Council in Ceylon, after making a careful inquiry, at the request of the Governor, into the history and conditions of the people, recommended to the Secretary of State, inter alia, the creation of a Legislative Assembly, including representatives elected by each province. Those recommendations were accepted by the Secretary of State, and would have been given effect to but for a change of Government in England.

That was indeed a grave misfortune to Ceylon. For a hundred years we have been deprived of all power and responsibility and tied to the apron strings of a bureaucracy. Even the petty village headman, who was formerly the elected servant of the village, has become its master and tyrant. Our powers and capacities are dwarfed and stunted, and there has been a gradual atrophy of political genius and an indifference to public matters. We live in an atmosphere of inferiority and can never under this system rise to the full height of which our manhood is capable of rising. Denied the opportunity of training in governing ourselves in the smallest matters we are told that we are unfit for anything better. To have been deemed fit in 1809 by the responsible advisers of the Crown for such a Constitution as Sir Alexander Johnston recommended and the Secretary of State approved, and to be now in

1917 deemed fit only for the paternal despotism of an irresponsible Crown Colony Administration, is the measure of our fall and of the blighting influence of an unprogressive bureaucracy, however excellent their intentions. Some of our own people, who ought to know better, have been so demoralised by this influence that they actually maintain that we ought to be quite content with the present state of things. Well, there is no accounting for tastes. We have heard from our grandfathers that, when domestic slavery was abolished, many slaves refused to be enfranchised and looked down with scorn on those who wished to be free.

The National Missionary Council of India, of which the Metropolitan of Calcutta is the Chairman, said recently in its Open Letter to the Missionaries of India:-

"It is as much an ideal of good government to provide for everyone of its subjects the opportunity for the development of this personality as it is to provide for the whole body politic the blessings of order, peace and justice.....Nothing adds more to the richness of man's life and to the development of his personality than responsibility." "One result of our work," adds the Missionary Council, "will be to make men fit for, as

well as desirous of, taking their share in the burden of responsibility for their country's welfare.

We demand the liberty to take our share in the burden of this responsibility, to manage our own lives, make our own mistakes, gain strength by knowledge and experience, and acquire that self-confidence and self-respect which are indispensable to national progress and success. We seek to be in our own country what other self-respecting people are in theirs, self-governing, strong, respected at home and abroad, and we ask for the grant at once of a definite measure of progressive advance towards that goal.

It was under the impulse of some such feeling as this that a number of leading men, representative of various communities, began to meet about a year ago and to discuss the position and future of our country. They did this in a quiet way, being reluctant to embark on a wide-spread political propaganda which might lead to undesirable public excitement during this time of war. While these deliberations were proceeding, the Imperial School who aim, *inter alia*, at giving the Self-Governing Dominions an effective share in the administration of the Crown Colonies with a view to controlling their inhabitants and resources, gained a triumph in their summoning of an Imperial

Conference in which Ceylon had no voice or representation.

As a High-priest of this school, Lord Milner, has said:-

"The population and resources of the Dependent Empire represent a direct addition to the defensive strength of the Empire as a whole and, at the lowest, a withdrawal from the potential resources of our rivals. It affords a great market for our industries and a source of supply for raw materials; and in both respects its capacities can be enormously increased. From the economic point of view, indeed, the Dependent Empire, which is also the Tropical Empire, is an essential and indispensable correlative to the Self-Governing Empire which lies almost wholly in the temperate zone. At present it is mainly the United Kingdom which benefits by this integral connection between its industries and raw materials and consuming power of its tropical dependencies. But the other Self-Governing States of the Empire are rapidly passing from the purely agricultural to the industrial state and, as that process develops, will become increasingly conscious of the value of the Dependent Empire, which, indeed, in many respects is the biggest asset which the United Kingdom will contribute to the common stock when it enters into real partnership

with them. Again the administration of the Dependent Empire not only provides a career for thousands of Englishmen, today, but creates a class of men whose official experience and standard of public duty are undoubtedly an addition to our national life. Here, too, partnership in the Empire has something to offer, to the junior States, something well worth acquiring."

The recent proposals of the Empire Resources Development Committee have been condemned by organs of liberal English public opinion, such as the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the London *Daily News*, as a policy unworthy of Great Britain and as

"almost wholly pernicious. Legitimate development of the Crown Colonies is among the greatest needs of the Empire, but it will consist of educating the natives, not of exploiting them; turning them into independent producers, not forced labourers."

In these circumstances inaction on our part, or delay, in organising and publishing our views and making our voice heard, would have been highly detrimental to the interests of Ceylon. The Ceylon National Association, therefore, invited me to address them at their annual meeting on the 2nd April last. I did so, and my



Address was published in pamphlet form under the title **OUR POLITICAL NEEDS**, and distributed throughout the country. It was accompanied by a circular letter, intimating that it was proposed to form a Ceylon Reform League for the purpose of effecting reform in the general administration of the Island and in the Legislative and Executive Councils on the lines suggested in the Address, and inviting those who were in sympathy with the movement to join the proposed League.

When replies had been received, the **CEYLON REFORM LEAGUE** was formed on the 17th of May last. On the 20th of June a carefully considered Memorial was submitted to the Governor for despatch to the Secretary of State, setting forth in outline the measures considered immediately necessary for the remedying of the evils under which the people of Ceylon labour. I need not detail those measures. The Memorial has been widely published and is known to you. But, briefly, we asked for the reform of the Legislative Council by the abolition of nominated members, of racial representation and of the official majority and the creation of elected members on a territorial basis, with an elected majority and an elected President or Speaker; the reduction of the number of official members in the Executive Council from 8 to 3,

and the appointment of two elected unofficial members; the full development of Local Self-Government in town and country through councils with elected majorities and elected chairmen; the greatly increased employment of Ceylonese in the higher branches of the public service now almost monopolised by Europeans; the wide extension of education, elementary, secondary and higher, the immediate establishment of a University, and the appropriation of at least 25 per cent. of the revenue for educational purposes; and the appointment of a Ceylonese to the Imperial Council when it is formed.

It was necessary to submit the Memorial promptly to the authorities in order to counteract as far as possible the mischievous activities of the Imperialists at the Imperial Conference so far as they affected the interests of Ceylon. At the same time steps were taken to promote the formation of political associations throughout the Island with a view to organising public opinion and submitting a public memorial to the Secretary of State. At this juncture the Imperial Government made an important announcement to the people of India. The Government declared its policy as:

"the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire;"

and stated that they had decided to send the Secretary of State for India, Mr. Montagu, to confer personally with the local governments and the people's representatives and to concert measures to give effect to this policy. The Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association wired to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Colonies to authorise their colleague, Mr. Montagu, to receive in India on behalf of the Imperial Government a deputation from Ceylon on the subject of Constitutional Reform. It was intended, if the reply was favourable, to have delegates appointed by associations throughout the Island to form the deputation.

His Majesty's Government replied that they were unable to accede to the request and that the Secretary of State proposed to confer personally with His Excellency the Governor during his forthcoming visit to England on the whole question of the Constitution of Ceylon. It became then necessary to prepare and

submit a definite scheme to Sir John Anderson before he sailed. That was done by the Ceylon: Reform League and the Ceylon National Association, with such consultation as could be held with the various district Associations. The Memorandum containing the scheme and the reasons therefor were submitted to him early last month. That Memorandum has been circulated among the various Associations and published in the Press, and steps were taken to convene this Conference to consider the scheme and the question of a public memorial to the Secretary of State. The Draft of the proposed Memorial has been circulated among you, and it will be for you to decide on the adoption of the Memorial with such modification as you may approve of. You will find in para 11 of the Memorial the scheme that has been suggested for the Reform of the Legislative Council. We have received representations from various Associations, in deference to which we have revised the scheme. The scheme, as revised, is also before you.

You will see that its main principles are the total abolition in the Legislative Council, of the nomination of unofficial members by the Governor, and the provision for a large increase in the number of elected members and for an elected majority with an elected

Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; and in the Executive Council a reduction in the number of official members and the introduction of an elected unofficial element. The system of nomination has been so worked in this Island that it has proved injurious to its interests. The average type of nominated member has almost reduced unofficial representation to a farce in spite of a few brilliant exceptions; and for one person who is nominated to a seat there are dozens scheming and scrambling for it under conditions which have poisoned the whole atmosphere of our political life. Another main principle is the elimination of racial representation. But certain important minorities-- the Europeans, Burghers and Mohammedans- are wedded to it and fear that if they are deprived of it, they may not secure faithful representatives of their interests in Council. We do not share those fears, but we have thought it desirable to yield to their wishes and to acquiesce in their continuing to have racial representation. We have little doubt that, in course of time, they will consent to join the general electorate. In this connection I may read to you a letter I have received from an esteemed member of the Burgher community, Mr. Willie, a member also of the Ceylon National Association, who is unable to be present to-

day. (*Reads Mr. Willie's letter.*) Mr. Willie's suggestions have been anticipated and met in the scheme. Apart from the three minorities, each province will have one member and in some cases more according to the importance of its population in numbers, education, wealth etc. Including the representatives of the three minorities, there will be altogether 21 elected members as against the present number of 4 elected and 6 nominated unofficials, and the number of official members will remain at 12. In the Executive Council, provision is made for the reduction of official members to three and for the appointment of two elected unofficial members.

No scheme can be perfect or satisfy everybody. This has been prepared after careful consideration of all the conditions of the problem, and I recommend its adoption by you as a good working scheme. We must all give and take, we must sink our differences and present a united front to achieve our object, which is to obtain immediately the beginning of Responsible Government. Any defects in the scheme can be remedied later, for of course this is not a final scheme. Our goal is Responsible Government in full measure, such as prevails in the Self-governing Dominions. We have specially asked in para 17 of the Memorial, that

this be declared to be the goal of British policy in Ceylon, as it has been declared in India.

I have no doubt that this Conference, so representative and influential, will arrive at a satisfactory solution of the difficulties that have been raised, without prejudice, however, to the main principles of the scheme. We all feel that racial representation is pernicious and has operated to widen cleavages in the community and to obstruct that unity and harmony which we should all do our best to promote. I cannot see that any question can come up before the Legislative Council which is likely to be decided to the detriment of any particular community. If such a decision should ever be arrived at, it will be promptly reversed by the veto expressly vested in the Governor and the Secretary of State. We may, I think, look forward with confidence to the grant of substantial Reforms in our Constitution by the Imperial Government, and I am sure that our people will make such use of them as to hasten the establishment of Responsible Government, which we all earnestly desire as essential for the efficiency of the administration, the happiness of the people and the stability of British Rule.

#### IV. Constitutional Reforms II

*[The following is the text of the Presidential Address of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam at the Ceylon National Conference held at Colombo on 13th December, 1918]*

I thank you for the honour you have done me in electing me to preside over this great National Conference. The first duty we have to discharge to-day is to submit to the Throne our sentiments on the glorious success of the British and Allied arms in the desolating war which has just reached a happy ending. Words fail to express our relief and joy. Our hearts are so full and the occasion so solemn that any language would be inappropriate and paltry. The hundreds of thousands of gallant men who have fallen, the still larger number that have endured agonies worse than death, in championing the cause of Righteousness and Freedom and the right of all peoples, small and great, to self-development and self-determination, have not died and suffered in vain. The Central Powers have been shattered for ever, and the world's peace and liberty have been made safe. The monstrous brood of Imperialism, Militarism, and Capitalism, which have long oppressed the earth, culminating in this deluge of blood, have received their death-blow. We are on the



threshold of a new and a better world. In the words of Mr. Asquith, the Allied victory guarantees to all nations security against sinister and predatory ambitions and the full right of self-determination; or, as President Wilson has put it, the interest of the weakest is in the eyes of the Allies as sacred as the interest of the strongest. Small nations may now breathe freely and may unmolested live their own lives, work out their own development and make their own contribution to the world's civilization and happiness. Ceylon is proud to have borne her share in this crusade of imperishable glory. The memory of the achievements of this war will be an inspiration to generations yet unborn and will live for all time as a treasured possession of humanity. It is meet that we lay our loyal devotion and congratulations at the feet of the Sovereign, who is the symbol of a free united and unconquerable Empire. The motion which I am privileged to submit to you is as follows. I have no doubt you will pass it enthusiastically and with acclamation.

*This Conference tenders its loyal homage to His Majesty the King and respectfully submits its joyful congratulations upon the success of the British and Allied arms in overthrowing the Central Powers and in upholding the British ideals of Liberty, Self-*

*development and Self-determination for all peoples, great and small."*

[The Resolution was passed with acclamation and enthusiastic applause, the whole audience standing.]  
Sir Ponnambalam then continued:-

I now proceed to the main business which has brought us together. It is a great satisfaction to those who have organized the Conference to see so large and representative a gathering drawn from all parts of the Island in spite of to-day's engagements and attractions elsewhere. This, the second Annual Conference, will, I trust, put the seal on the work of the first, which was held last December and over which it was my happiness to preside. This usefulness of these conferences in co-ordinating public opinion and political thought and work is now so obvious, that it is proposed to ask you before you separate to provide a permanent organization for convoking a National Congress periodically and carrying into effect its resolutions. At the last Conference, which was attended by 144 delegates, a public Memorial was adopted, asking for much-needed reforms in our Constitution and Administration. The Memorial was duly forwarded to the Secretary of State. You may remember that, two months earlier, in October, 1917,

he informed us, in reply to a joint cable from the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association, that he proposed to discuss personally with His Excellency Sir John Anderson, during his forthcoming visit to England, the whole question of the Constitution of Ceylon. That meeting unfortunately did not take place. The Governor's illness prevented him from leaving Ceylon, nor did he live to complete his report on the Reforms to the Secretary of State. His beneficent administration was cut short before the close of its second year. He died on the 24th of March last to the infinite sorrow of our people. Their feeling about him was well expressed in a resolution of the Ceylon Reform League which was forwarded to the Government:-

*" The Ceylon Reform League desires to place on record its grief on the death of His Excellency the Governor Sir John Anderson, G.C.M.G., K. C. B., its sense of the great loss sustained by the people of Ceylon, its admiration of his character and personality and heroic discharge of duty, its gratitude for his wise and beneficent administration distinguished by courageous justice and impartiality, by sympathy and self-sacrificing devotion to the people's welfare. The League*

*begs to express to Captain and Mrs. Anderson and other members of His Excellency's family its sincere sympathy in their bereavement, and to assure them that his memory will be enshrined in the hearts of a grateful people."*

Every word of this resolution will, I am sure, be approved and confirmed by this Conference. (Prolonged applause). Immediately after the funeral, at a representative Ceylonese meeting, it was decided to raise in Sir John Anderson's memory a Fund for the promotion of higher education and research in the Island, and a sum of two lakhs of rupees was subscribed on the spot. The scheme, when it becomes a *fait accompli*, will be a memorial in every way worthy of that great Governor. It will go some way towards supplying a crying need and will, I hope, rouse the Government from its apathy in regard to higher education.

The political atmosphere has, since June last, changed for the better by the publication of Mr. Montagu's and Lord Chelmsford's Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms. The Report is the fruit of exhaustive personal investigation and careful consideration by the Secretary of State for India in concert with the Viceroy. It recommends the immediate grant of reforms in

pursuance of the policy announced by His Majesty's Government in the House of Commons on the 20th August, 1917:-viz., the policy of 'the increasing association of Indians in ever)' branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." These recommendations, which are supported by arguments of irresistible force, have been the subject of much discussion and criticism, and a large volume of Indian public opinion holds that the pledges of the Imperial Government have not been fully redeemed in these recommendations and that they must be amended in many respects before they can be acceptable to India. However that may be, we, in Ceylon, feel -and feel most strongly,-that the reforms offered to India are not adequate for Ceylon and that the reforms for this Island should be of a more liberal character to suit our conditions. Resolutions on these lines will be submitted to you.

As Ceylon History is for the most part excluded from our schools and, where taught, ignores or belittles the achievements of our people and takes scanty notice of our institutions and customs, our traditions, ideals and aspirations, and of all that is best and characteristic in

our civilization, it will be news even to many of our educated classes to hear that Ceylon was for over twenty centuries an autonomous country, *i.e.*, was governed by the natives of this country, even where from considerations of public policy it was deemed necessary here, as in many other countries East and West, to invite royal princes from neighbouring lands to preside over the National Government. The Government, it is true, was not democratic in the sense that it could be called to account by the masses of the people and replaced by another if they were not satisfied. But democracy in this sense is quite a recent development even in the West.

Take one of the most advanced of Western lands, the England with which we are most familiar. It is a commonplace of English history that, until the Reform Bill of 1832, the Government was practically in the hands of the King (sometimes one with little or no English blood or speech) and of a few noble families. The number of Parliamentary voters in the first quarter of the 19th century was exceedingly small, and what with pocket boroughs and rotten boroughs and wholesale corruption and intimidation, the land-owning aristocracy had it all their own way. Even Gladstone, in spite of his transcendent abilities and of being a wealthy merchant's son, could not enter the

House of Commons save through a pocket borough of the Duke of Newcastle who prided himself on "doing what he liked with his own." The nobles jealously guarded their power and gave a reluctant assent to the Reform Bill, compelled by the rising tide of popular wrath and violence which seriously threatened civil war. Under this Act, which increased the number of voters by nearly half-a-million, the middle classes began to exercise influence and to share in the administration in their own right. But the nobility still retained the lion's share of the power and the prizes.

Not till the Reform Bill of 1867 was anything approaching- to a popular franchise introduced, again under the pressure of mob violence. Then for the first time the artisan in the towns received a vote, and about a million names were added to the roll. As he was ignorant and it was necessary to train him for the exercise of the franchise, or (as a Cabinet Minister of the day, Mr. Robert Lowe, put it) as "it was necessary to educate our masters," a scheme of popular education was passed, the first attempt of the kind in English history; a sad but eloquent testimony to the interest taken by the ruling classes in the welfare of the people whose destinies were entrusted to their care. Such lack of interest can hardly be charged against our

rulers of old, who maintained here for centuries a wide-spread system of popular education through the monasteries.

In 1872, the British voter was given the protection of the ballot against intimidation and corrupt influences. In 1884, the franchise was extended to the agricultural labourer, and about 2 million additional voters came on the roll. The full benefit of these liberal measures has not been reaped by the labouring classes, owing to the lack of unity and organization among them and their inability to cope with the device of the caucuses, which play a predominant part in selecting and financing Parliamentary candidates and are under the control of the upper and middle classes. Of late, however, the Trade Unions have learned to organize effectively, and Demos has become a power to reckon with. During the present year under the pressure of the war the franchise has received an immense extension, so that there is universal suffrage for men and, for the first time, suffrage for women.

Under this New Reform Act of 1918, which is regarded as the people's great Charter of emancipation and governs the elections now being held, the electorate of 1884 has been nearly trebled and contains close on twenty-one million voters, of whom



about 8 millions are women. Only now is it possible for the masses of the English people to make their voices heard and felt. Democracy has at last come into its own, at least in the bigger affairs of Government. But much remains to be done to make its influence prevail in local administration which, after all, is of greater importance to the average citizen, and especially to the poor man, as it is intertwined with his life at every turn. He is now practically divorced from the local administration, especially in the rural districts.

The Local Government Act of 1894 which established rural councils in the hope of securing his co-operation, has not succeeded in its object. The British peasant takes little part or interest in the administration of local affairs and remains a drudge and a hireling, very unlike what he was in the earlier periods of English history, before king and nobles and a servile Parliament robbed him of his lands, private and communal, and condemned him to lifelong, ill-paid toil with the workhouse and a pauper's grave often at the end. This war has, however, revealed him to the world as having something of the true stuff of heroes. His experiences have no doubt given him new ideas and a new spirit, which will make him rather a difficult person for his late masters to deal with.

Now with this state of things compare Ceylon. Here, as in most parts of India, the administration of affairs was under the native kings mainly in the hands of the people through councils, rural and urban (apart from caste and trade Councils *panchayats*, of which the *nagarams* of the Nattu-kottai Chetties in Colombo and elsewhere are specimens), and was carried on without interference from the King's officials unless it was invoked by the people or became necessary through their inability to protect themselves from aggression or to pay the taxes due to the State from the village. The vast majority of the population being agricultural, rural councils were naturally more numerous. Lord Metcalfe, Governor-General of India, giving his evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1832, said:-

"The Village Communities are little republics, having nearly everything they can want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last, when nothing else lasts. Dynasty follows dynasty, revolution succeeds revolution. Hindu, Pathan, Moghul, Mahratta, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn. But the Village Community remains the same."

It was an organized, autonomous, self-acting group of families, complete in itself, exercising a common proprietorship over a definite tract of land, cultivating its domain on a common system, sustaining itself by the produce and providing by a more or less complete staff of functionaries for internal government, for police, for administration of justice, for apportionment of taxes and public duties and for protection against the aggression of its neighbours.

In Ceylon every village (*gama*) had its council (*gansabhawa*) for the administration of its affairs. The Village Council has survived through all the vicissitudes of twenty-four centuries and is part of our modern constitution, though greatly shorn of its powers and a mere puppet in the hands of the Government Agent and his subordinates. Each village Council sent its delegates to the District Council (*Rata Sabhawa*) which continued to exist within living memory. Above these stood the Supreme Council of the Ministers of State, and the King who was considered the elected Supreme Magistrate. The form of election of the King was gone through, even in the most reactionary times, and down to the last of Ceylon's Kings a hundred years ago.

The actual working of these institutions has been revealed to us by a number of inscriptions ranging in time from 800 to 1100 A. D. during the administration of South India by the Chola Kings whose empire, you may remember, included Ceylon, for about half-a-century up to 1065, as one of its provinces with Polonnaruwa as the Capital. These inscriptions, which are published in Volume III of the *South Indian Inscriptions*, show that the Village Council was the sole government of the village or village-group in all its departments. It was divided into committees of "great men" elected for each year. There was (1) the Central Committee of general supervision and management, including the collection of taxes and apportionment of revenue and duties; and Smaller Committees (2) for the administration of justice, (3) for irrigation works and irrigation funds; (4) for supervision of gardens, (5) for fields, (6) for wards, (7) for the administration of temples and charities and also other committees, subject to the supervision of the King's officers (*Adhikaris*). These officials moved through their divisions, examined accounts and made allotment of royal revenues to the councils to be spent at their discretion. Elaborate rules are given as for the election of committee men, their qualifications and disqualifications, and their selection by a mixed

procedure of election and lot on something like the old Athenian model. The tenure of office was made strictly annual, in order to give every villager the chance of acquainting himself with the work of administration and making the general committee of supervision efficient in the control of the smaller committees.

It is interesting to observe that women were eligible for election and that a woman was a member of a committee of justice. The village council was absolute proprietor of the village lands; when fresh clearings were made, it became the proprietor of the newly-acquired lands; when lands were thrown out of cultivation, the council took them over and gave them to others who would pay the stipulated taxes. It was the Council's business to see that the actual cultivator was not molested in the possession of his holding; failing in which duty, the committee-men for the year were liable to be fined by the general committee. The Council had its own treasury; received deposits of money and grants of lands for charitable purposes and administered them by a board appointed from year to year; recovered all taxes and granted lands tax-free for purposes of charity and could waive all or any taxes; could take over lands for default of payment of taxes. When the Council deemed it necessary, it sought

instructions from the central authority and received them through the King's Chief Secretary (*Olainayakam.*).

The jurisdiction of the Council in the matter of the administration of justice was equally ample. It tried cases of homicide and had power to impose the capital sentence. In three instances disclosed by the inscriptions, death being found due to accident or carelessness, heavy fines were inflicted. In one of these cases the King's officer took cognizance of it first, but did not find himself competent to proceed without the Council; the two other cases were dealt with by the Council without a reference to the King's officer. Great interest appears to have been taken by the Councils in the discharge of their manifold functions, as the many references to the Council having met "without a vacancy" would show.

We are fortunate in having this authentic information of the ancient system of administration in the Chola Empire of which Ceylon was for some time a part. While this autonomous administration by popular Councils has almost entirely died out in India, in Ceylon we have the institutions lingering still, a shadow of their former selves and exercising at least nominally some of the old powers. Their decline began during

the troublous times in which the people of Ceylon had to fight for their existence against European invaders, and was accelerated and completed under British Rule. Under such a system of popular administration as I have delineated, the character of the King and his officers was not of very great consequence to the masses of the people. Ceylon had no doubt her share of bad kings, nobles and officials throughout her long history, which goes back earlier than the Roman Empire. But the average compared very favourably with that of other countries, ancient or modern. On the whole, our kings had a high standard of duty and made it their pride to follow in the footsteps of their great model, the Indian Emperor Asoka of the 3rd century B.C., whose inscribed rocks and stone pillars, still found from Cashmere to Mysore, bear testimony to the extent of his Empire, the righteousness and wisdom of his rule and the nobility of his character.

It was this system of administration, rising from Village and District Councils to the Great Council of the Ministers of State and the King, that the British Government pledged the continuance of-but with the substitution of the King of Great Britain for King Sri Vickrama Raja Sinha-to the people of Ceylon at the Great Convention of 1815 at Kandy. Six years earlier, when only the maritime districts were under British

control, Sir Alexander Johnston, Chief Justice and first Member of the King's Council in Ceylon, after making a careful inquiry at the request of the Governor into the history and conditions of the people, recommended to the Secretary of State, *inter alia*, the creation of a Legislative Assembly, including representatives elected by each province. Those recommendations were accepted by the Secretary of State, and would have been given effect to, but for a change of Government in England. The failure to adopt these recommendations and to act up to the pledge given at Kandy has been disastrous to us. The whole administration has been centralised to a degree unparalleled in any part of the world, and is in the hands of a bureaucracy, without understanding or knowledge of, and sympathy with, a people deprived of all part and interest in their affairs.

It may be said that we have had peace and prosperity since. No doubt certain classes among us have prospered greatly: the merchant, the broker, the lawyer, the capitalist, the big landowner and others. But the peasant and the labourer, who produce the Island's wealth, have had little share of the prosperity and find the daily struggle for life more and more arduous and bitter. If for them, and for all, there were a tenfold more plenteous harvest of material wealth



and comfort, could it, or anything, compensate us for the dwarfing and stunting of our powers and capacities, for the loss of virility and self-respect, inseparable from the present system of administration?

This feeling is intelligible to every true Englishman. A distinguished military officer with long Indian experience, Sir Frank Younghusband, said recently in a letter to the London *Times*, and his remarks apply equally to Ceylon: "If we never accustom Indians to bearing burdens, their muscles become atrophied through disuse, and this is precisely what has been happening till now. We have established order and made administration immeasurably more efficient than it was before. But I am not sure that the nett result has not been to sap the virility of the Indians and blunt the keen edge of the verve that is in them. Through doing things ourselves in order that they may be well done, and through letting the Indians lean upon us, as they are wont to do in times of stress, we may have withered the development of their native wit and fibre. From every point of view, it is desirable that Indians should grow up on their own lines strong, healthy and erect. The stronger India becomes, the more capable of governing herself she grows and the less dependent on us, the better for the whole Empire. Instead of being a strain and a drain, India might become a

source of strength and a model for every other Asiatic country."

The Royal Commissioners of 1832 expressed the strong hope that Ceylon might be such a model. How little has that hope been realised! And this because the authorities here and in Downing Street have thought more of efficient administration and of British prestige than of the British ideals of Self-development and Self-determination for all nations, small and great. Grant all that has been said of the efficiency of the present system. But people cannot live on efficiency alone, and (in the words of Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu) *"efficiency may be too dearly bought at the price of moral inanition"*—the result of a whole century of spoon-feeding by British officials.

For this perhaps the local officials are not altogether to blame. They had no instructions to do anything else and have got into a groove. It was for the Colonial Office to give instructions, to survey the whole field of administration, to enunciate and enforce fresh principles and policies to suit changing times and needs. But that office has been too busy to attend to poor Ceylon. It finds the time inopportune for the consideration of her case and would gladly put it off to a distant date. Yet the India Office and the Viceroy

have found the time opportune, and even urgent, for considering exhaustively the far more complex and difficult problems of that vast Empire and for propounding an elaborate Scheme of Reform, which the various local Indian Governments are now engaged in helping to carry out, with the help of Committees sent out from England to adjust the details to the principles that have been laid down. During the greater part of last century Ceylon had in some measure the benefit of the liberal spirit which governs the relations of Downing Street with the Self-governing Dominions. But, under the influence of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Office has been divided into two distinct compartments, the Dominions division and the Crown Colonies division. Ceylon, in spite of her ancient history and civilisation, is graded with the Negro and Mulatto Colonies of the West Indies and with the wild tribes of Africa and Fiji, and has a less liberal Constitution than the West Indian Colonies.

Even under these cramping conditions the innate capacity and talent of our people has manifested itself. I need not cite, in support of this, facts and figures well known to you all. But I will give a remarkable piece of testimony from the chief English paper in the East, the *Pioneer* of Allahabad, which was quoted in the Ceylon

*Times* of the 30th of last month. It was an article by a British officer about the Tamil as a soldier: He was admittedly a splendid fighter in days gone past; as the writer says, "no records adorn any page of military history prouder than those of the Tamil regiments with which Clive and Wellesley won India for England." Latterly the Tamil was supposed to have lost his soldierly qualities, and recruiting among them had been largely stopped until this war. But here is this Officer, after commanding them in Mesopotamia, singing a paean of praise in their honour, and declaring emphatically that "they can be put by the side of the best British Infantry regiments and stand the test," and that "they can hold their heads as high to-day as when they blazoned on the standard of the Madras Army an imperishable lustre."

Remember that these regiments are composed mainly of the lower strata of the Tamil people, the classes from which rickshaw-wallahs, horse-keepers, estate coolies, etc., are drawn. If men of this grade can under proper training and leadership rise so high and merit such high praise, is it not a thing too deep for tears that in civil life they should hath by ourselves and by European employers be trodden down and kept in the grievous conditions which prevail among our labourers, especially on estates ? Have we not reason

to lament what man has made of man? What heights, too, might not be reached by our youth of the upper and middle classes, if they were given the opportunity and the training! We know the splendid stand that the Sinhalese made against European armies for three centuries until they voluntarily surrendered the Island to the British sovereign with full reservation of their rights and liberties. Yet how they have all been cowed down! At the beginning of the war I suggested to our late Governor, Sir Robert Chalmers, to raise regiments from among the Sinhalese and Tamils in the rural districts. My suggestion was received with amused surprise. I have not the least doubt that, if they had been given the opportunity, Sinhalese regiments would have revived the glories of their ancestors and shed renewed lustre on Ceylon. Under this baneful Crown Colony administration, virile citizens are not bred but docile clerks and useful wheels in the official machinery. How far does this satisfy the first maxim of British statesmen, that British Rule should operate as an elevating force on the character of the governed?

Grant, for the sake of argument, that our native rulers were despotic and kept us down and excluded us from all share in the Government. Does it follow that we are, therefore, unfit for Responsible Government? On the same grounds a democracy could never exist, say, in

France. For two hundred years before the French Revolution the French people were groaning under a despotism as severe and crushing as any in the world. During all that time the French Parliament and all trace of popular government ceased to exist. The King's word was law.\* Carlyle mentions that French nobles, fond of shooting, used to bring down slaters and plumbers and see them roll from the roofs. He mentions an incredible law authorising a nobleman, as he returned from hunting, to kill not more than two serfs and refresh his feet in their warm blood and bowels. Yet the French are the most democratic people on earth, and have been for over a century and a quarter.

Again, it is objected that our people are illiterate, and therefore unfit for Responsible Government. For the illiteracy that unfortunately prevails the people are not responsible. The British Government found here a fairly widespread system of popular education and had only to continue and develop it. If this had been done, illiteracy would have been long since wiped out instead of embracing in its grasp 73·6% of the population and 89·4% of females alone. Japan with a population of 70 millions, or nearly 20 times the population of Ceylon,

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\* L'Etat c'et moi [Louis XIV to expostulating Magistrate.]

has absolutely wiped out illiteracy in fifty years, *i.e.*, in less than half the period of British Rule in Ceylon. But though there is in Ceylon a lamentably large proportion of persons unable to read and write, it would be incorrect to assume from the experience of Western countries that our people are strangers to literature. Here, as in India, by constant hearing the people are familiar with the national scriptures and traditions, religious and secular, which (after making all allowance for shortcomings) contain a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur, and forbid the veriest hind who has not left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries, of a great past stretching back to the dawn of history and of the working of moral laws. It is a straining of language to deny the term "literate" to persons who have thus grown up in the knowledge of what is best in their religion and literature and who, conforming their daily conduct as far as possible to rules which they have learnt to regard as right, have become useful members of society, and to apply the term to children at school.

If the knowledge of the three R's were so indispensable to education, how can we explain the observation of Robert Knox as to the culture and refinement of the Sinhalese peasant? After living twenty years among them as an unwilling guest of King Raja Sinha, Knox

says (in his *Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon*, 1681) that the ordinary ploughman had the elegant speech and the elegant manner of the courtier. He quotes with approval the peasants' saying: "Take a ploughman from the plough, wash off his dirt and he is fit to rule a kingdom." What superb self-confidence! Whither has that spirit fled under a Crown Colony administration? Is that not its strongest condemnation?

But if illiteracy is to be a bar to political advance, why was it not in England? What was the extent of literacy at the time of the Reform Bill of 1832? Eight years later, in 1840, half the married men in England were found to be unable to sign their names in the marriage register. Popular education began there only after the Reform Bill of 1867 and as a consequence of it, and is still so far from being complete that the great Labour Conference this year was vociferous in its demands for its extension and improvement and put it in the forefront of its programme. As in England, so here no real effort in the direction of popular and higher education is possible or likely, until we have an effective share in, and control of, the Administration; and this conviction is one of the chief motive forces of the Reform Movement.



Education is the most vital question with us, but the apathy and indifference of the Authorities in regard to it are reminiscent of the spirit of the ruling classes of 100 years ago in England towards the masses of the English people. In Ceylon, primary education, inefficient, ill-organised, advances slowly and languidly. Secondary education is in a worse state and higher education is non-existent, though twenty years ago Mr. Joseph Chamberlain declared that "money spent on higher education is the best of all possible national investments." Instruction in science and manual arts is generally crude and feeble, and vocational training wholly absent. The University College, which was decided on, a dozen years ago, by Sir Henry McCallum and was to be the preparation for a University, is still in the future. The latest official pronouncement, if I have understood it aright-I sincerely hope I have not-is that, if we by private subscription find the money for erecting the buildings for a University and for endowing it, the Government will do its share. It is not clear what share will then remain to Government, except fixing the curriculum and appointing the professors to be paid by us. This is not the encouragement and support we have been led to expect from solemn declarations of previous

Governors, nor will it help to discharge the obligations of the Government to the people.

Regarded not merely as an instrument of national culture and for the production of good citizens, but even from a purely material point of view, education, especially scientific and technical education, is of vital importance to us. Science is the most important factor of modern life, and the renaissance of Japan has shown how the life and character of a people may be revolutionized by scientific study conducted in the proper spirit and manner. There is, in my view, no more pressing need than the development of Ceylon's industrial resources, a great store of wealth to her people and an imperial asset. Such development is impossible without scientific and technical education vigorously promoted by the Government. Without it Ceylon will continue to be a helpless victim to economic exploitation by other countries.

Is it creditable to Ceylon, after over a hundred years of British Rule, to be behind even Indian States like Mysore, with less than half the wealth and resources of Ceylon and no panoply of highly paid British officials, but manned by Indian officers from top to bottom? Our Director of Education, Mr. Denham, has visited Mysore. Ask him what he thinks of that progressive

State, with her great educational and industrial activities. They should make us blush with shame. The other day, in organising a series of what are in Ceylon, and nowhere else, called advanced lectures for students, we borrowed a lecturer from the Mysore University. All remember the impression made by the lectures on Economics delivered by Mr. Subba Rao. Why had we to go to Mysore for a lecturer on a subject of this kind ? Why, too, has Ceylon not such men as Mr. Ramanujan, a poor Tamil clerk of Madras, who has just been elected a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, for mathematical researches, which had previously gained him the highest scientific distinction in the British Empire, a Fellowship of the Royal Society, at the youngest age since Huxley? There are hosts of others in India distinguished in every department of knowledge. We have not such men in Ceylon, not because we are inferior in capacity, but because we have not the opportunity and the training.

In July last, when one of the band of noble Englishmen, who have espoused our cause and are determined to see British ideals and principles vindicated by being applied to Ceylon, asked in the House of Commons what steps had been taken by the Colonial Office on the Memorial sent to it by the Public Conference of December last, the reply given

by Mr. Hewins for the Secretary of State was dilatory and unsatisfactory. He said that the time was inopportune for fully considering the question and that the Report of the new Governor would be awaited. The Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association, on receiving telegraphic intimation of this answer, cabled at once, on the 6th of August, expressing their disappointment and their inability to understand why the time was deemed inopportune, when the Indian Government had dealt with the far more complex and difficult problems of the Indian Empire and propounded a Reform Scheme for India. In a later cable of the 28th August, the League and the Association invited the attention of the Secretary of State to the debate on Indian Reforms in the House of Commons and to the principle of Self-government accepted by it for India; they requested application of the same principle to Ceylon and the grant of Reforms not less liberal than those granted to India, to which Ceylon is akin in race and culture but with conditions more favourable for political development; and they begged for an early declaration of the policy and broad outlines of reform, with instructions to the new Governor to adjust the details. They especially asked for (a) an enlarged Legislative Council on a wide franchise with a substantial elected majority; (b) for

Ceylonese members of the Executive Council; (c) for Ceylonese Ministers in charge of Departments; (d) for a substantial percentage of superior posts in the Public Service for Ceylonese; (e) for complete popular control of Municipal Councils and other local bodies, urban and rural, with elected Chairmen; all of which have been conceded to India.

The Resolutions that will be submitted today for your acceptance proceed on these lines, and have for their aim to express the vital principles and broad outlines which are considered essential by a vast mass of public opinion in this Island. These being accepted, the details, on which opinions naturally differ, will need to be adjusted by Committees appointed for the purpose and consisting of the representatives of the people as well as officials. The wisdom of our request to the Secretary of State has been demonstrated by the course of the debate that was raised in the Legislative Council last Wednesday by Mr. Ramanathan, the Ceylonese Member. There was not a dissentient voice as to the need for reforming our Administration and Constitution, though speakers differed as to details.

It is much to be regretted that the Government gave no indication of their views, and deferred an announcement of them until the Governor had had

the time and opportunity to ascertain the views and wishes of all sections of the community and to study the question thoroughly. As the Governor is quite new to Ceylon and its conditions, this means a very long delay which the people of Ceylon, already put off too long, will find it hard to brook. The delay would have been greatly curtailed, if the Secretary of State had first laid down for the Governor's guidance the principles and broad outlines as we requested. Until this is done, the Governor will be floundering in the dark and his investigation will be long and may be abortive. It is not fair to him or to the people, and is certainly not conducive to an early and satisfactory decision of the very important questions involved.

It would have in some measure softened the bitterness of popular disappointment, if His Excellency the Governor had in his reply to Mr. Ramanathan's motion given some hint of the spirit in which these questions were going to be tackled.

Is it realized that the War has changed and is changing the whole world fast and deep, that it has put the clock of time hundreds of years forward, and that our outlook can never be what it was before 1914? Has the new spirit, which the War has spread over the world and which has been the chief factor in winning the

victories we are celebrating, found a sympathetic echo in the hearts of our authorities-the spirit of liberty and of self-development on national lines, on which Mr. Balfour dwelt in addressing the Canadian Parliament at Ottawa in May, 1917? "Wherever you find democracy and the spirit of liberty abroad and that great spirit of self-development on national lines, there you find the friends of the Allies and the enemies of the Central Powers. We are convinced of only one form of Government, by whatever name it may be called, viz: where the ultimate control is in the hands of the people. We have staked our last dollar on this; and if democracy fails us we are bankrupt indeed. But we know that democracy will not fail us."

Mr. Balfour's confidence has been justified. Democracy has not failed us. Is the Government going to grant to the people of Ceylon the small instalment of freedom they have asked for to manage their own lives, make their own mistakes, gain strength by knowledge and experience and acquire that self-confidence and self-respect which are indispensable to national progress and national success? The answer of the Imperial Government has been given as to India with no uncertain sound in the Report of Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford on Indian Constitutional Reforms, and again in a recent speech of Mr.

Montagu. "Was not (he asked) the principle of the British Empire the principle of a Commonwealth of free nations? Was the ideal of our Empire geographical and not moral? What if we said that to our American Allies? What if, when we talked of the British ideal being self-governing institutions, we drew a line somewhere in the Indian Ocean and said 'thus far and no further'?"

We are glad to know from the European Member, Mr. Williams' statement in Council that his community is in sympathy with our aspirations. We expected that sympathy from them. We remember with gratitude what their leaders, such as Mr. George Wall, perhaps the greatest name in the Ceylon history of the 19th and 20th centuries, did for us; and we know how those splendid traditions have been continued by such men as William Digby, John Ferguson, and Harry Creasy. Last night's *Times*, however, I am sorry to observe, has struck a jarring note. It seemed to attribute the attitude of the European community to a desire to prevent by conciliation the entry of Bolshevism into Ceylon. Well, if in asking for what the Viceroy of India and the Indian Secretary of State have conceded to India, we are drifting into Bolshevism, we are in very good company.



I should not be surprised if a small section of illiberal Englishmen are opposed to Reform. The Chairman of the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce, Sir Alexander Birkmyre, declared recently that for years, if not generations past, the Europeans in India abstained from politics from habit, and he added: "There has been no need, and we have always felt that our interests were being safeguarded by our rulers, who after all are kith and kin with ourselves." We have no objection to their interests being safeguarded, but we certainly object to this being done at our expense. In Ceylon the British merchant and the British planter exercise too great an influence over public policy and measures. A chat over the dinner table, at the Club or on the golf links, does more than bushels of argument or months of agitation. Is not every head of a department, every member of the Government, every member of the official majority of the Legislative Council, the kith and kin of the British merchant and planter? Think of the recent scheme of taxation, which has made a handsome present from the public exchequer to the rubber merchant and broker. This relief, though acknowledged by themselves to be unnecessary, is persisted in, and made the occasion for increasing the taxation of classes unable to bear it. I suppose it is deemed a sign of strength not to yield to the public

opinion of Ceylon. Is it not rather a sign of weakness, this fear of acknowledging a mistake? Then we know what happened during 1915, when the Government and the Europeans lost their heads and did things which were properly characterised by our late Governor, Sir John Anderson. The public inquiry, which the people have repeatedly demanded into those events, has so far been refused, but is bound to come soon with the dawn of a new era in England, and with it such retribution as will for ever prevent a recurrence of events unworthy of the British name.

The relation between England and us requires the magic touch of sympathy and the alchemy of imagination. These qualities are not conspicuous features of the administration here or in India. His Majesty the King, when he visited India as Prince of Wales, with his wonderful insight noted the lack and publicly impressed on British officials the need for cultivating sympathy. We have in Ceylon some admirable officials. But, as an English journal said the other day, they must get away from the idea that they are something of the nature of the agents of Providence doing everything solely for the good of the people; sometimes it happens in life that people prefer to learn from their own experience, and even pay the penalty of mistakes, rather than have their lives and

affairs directed by another, no matter how well informed and good-intentioned. . .

It is fortunate for us that the final decision of the great questions, which we have assembled to-day to find a solution of, rests with the British People. The old forces of oligarchy and reaction will be swept away for ever by the elections that are now going on, and Democracy will for the first time in English history be predominant, if not supreme. They have had bitter experience of a ruling caste through the centuries, and can sympathize with us. It is to them that we shall make our chief appeal and, I am sure, not in vain. The great Labour organ, the *Herald*, said recently of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report: "These proposals are the reply of His Majesty's Government to the demand for Home Rule in the British Commonwealth which is put forward by the Indian National Congress representing every sect and party in that great country. *We are supporters of self-determination for all nations, big or little, consistent with the general well-being of all other nations. It is for Indians to determine whether these proposals offer a reasonable start towards self-government. We are not at all anxious to know what Englishmen say or think about them. Our view is that the people of India shall themselves be left quite free to choose whether to accept or reject. We*

*shall support organized Indian opinion in its struggle for freedom, for we are convinced that all people who desire freedom, as we do, must be willing to concede the same measure of freedom to others."*

The Resolutions, which have been framed by the Committees of the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association, in consultation with Delegates from provincial associations, will be explained to you by the gentlemen who are in charge of various motions and will, I have no doubt, be unanimously accepted by you. Resolution IV, you will observe, asks for the enlargement and reconstitution of our Legislative Council, so that it shall contain a majority of members elected upon the basis of a territorial electorate. This leaves it open for the minority to be selected in any other way that may approve itself to the Government and the minorities concerned. In the present state of feeling of some of the minorities, it is not practicable to abolish special representation for them. But I trust this is only a temporary expedient and that the working of the new system will convince the minorities that it is of the general interest of the whole Island as of themselves that special representation should in the end give way to one common electorate for the whole Island.

Resolution X is one of considerable importance. It provides for the appointment of delegates to proceed to England, when necessary, and submit our case to the Secretary of State and to the British Parliament and People. As the Governor's Report on the Reforms will apparently be delayed, it will, I think, be necessary to send two batches of delegates. The first should proceed almost immediately and, with the help of our Political Agency in London and of our British Committee consisting of many friends in and out of Parliament, prepare the ground for the second batch of delegates who will go after the Governor's Report is published I trust this Report will not be long delayed. I consider the despatch of delegates to England absolutely indispensable for the attainment of our aims. Unless our delegates meet the British people face to face and lay our case before them our efforts will be futile. A little crumb will be flung to us in the way of one or two more elected members in the Legislative Council and perhaps a seat in the Executive Council, and the whole machinery of autocracy will go on as before, and we shall be expected to be content and happy like the child in the illustration when he has got Pears' soap. But I know you are all determined that this shall not be the end of our efforts and that we shall,

with the aid of the British people and of British statesmanship be masters in our house.

In our zeal for political reform we must be on our guard against making it our end. We seek it only as a means to an end. We seek it not to win rights, but to fulfil duties-duties to ourselves and to our country. "The Theory of Rights:' said Mazzini,

"may suffice to arouse men to overthrow the obstacles placed in their path by tyranny, but it is impotent where the object in view is to create a noble and powerful harmony between the various elements of which a nation is composed. With the theory of happiness as the primary aim of existence we shall only produce egotists who will carry the old passions and desires into the new order of things and introduce corruption into it a few months after."

Peoples, like individuals, have each a divinely appointed and distinct task to perform. Self-development and responsibility are essential to the right fulfilment of that task, and self-development and responsibility are alike impossible without freedom.

Kept in leading strings by a grandmotherly Government we have not the opportunity for the

development of our personality. Our capacities have become dwarfed and stunted, the richness of man's life which comes from responsibility and liberty is not for us. Therefore it is we have demanded the right to manage our own lives.

Political power is a solemn responsibility, and its exercise is attended with temptations and risks. Ours are those bred of inexperience (for which the blame is not ours, but rests with those who have denied us the opportunity of experience during a hundred years,) and of racial, religious or caste differences. These, however, are greatly exaggerated by our critics, and are hardly so serious as in many a land which is autonomous. Lord Beaconsfield said of England that it contained two distinct nations-the rich and the poor. The saying is true of every Western country, and has become more so since his time. There is a yawning gulf of suspicion, hatred and fear between them, such as we in Ceylon can scarcely realize. We see its manifestations in the dreadful excesses now being committed in Russia and threatening in other parts of Europe. This cleavage (which is over and above that of race, creed, party, etc.) is largely the product of the materialistic spirit of modern Europe and America. The labourer has exchanged the thralldom of the old Feudal System for the more terrible thralldom of

Capitalism. It has pulled down Christ from the churches, and installed in His place the Mammon of unrestricted commerce and industrial power, exploiting the weak and the helpless, regarding men and women not as citizens but as fools of economic power. It has made the masses of the nations "cannon fodder of industry, and set an example which the proletariat, when it gets the power, can scarcely help following. The Capitalist's greed for markets and dividends is among the root-causes of the War that has been devastating the world.

It would be a sad day for Ceylon if this inhuman spirit took root in Ceylon and, as in Western countries, dominated Parliament and Government. There is no doubt that we have all, and especially the English-educated classes, become infected with it. When shall we realize the truth that you cannot hold any man in the gutter without staying there yourself, and that (as Tolstoy said) the only real help the rich man can give the poor is to get off his back?

The craving for money and luxury at any cost is alien to the genius of our people and civilization. The ideals and teaching of our great writers, Tamil and Sinhalese, the lives of our parents and grand-parents, were all in the direction of simple living, of the rich sharing their



wealth and comforts with the poor. Robert Knox, who lived twenty years among the Sinhalese in the seventeenth century, says of them that they are "very hardy both for diet and weather." Again, "riches are not here valued nor make any the more honourable, for many of the lower sorts do far exceed these hondrews" (his term for noblemen) "in estate, but it is the birth and parentage that ennobleth." Of the women: "They are in their gait and behaviour very high, stately in carriage, yet they hold it no scorn to admit the meanest to come to speech of them. They are very thrifty and it is a disgrace to them to be prodigal, and their pride and glory to be accounted near and saving ... Although they be so stately, they will lay their hands to such work as is necessary to be done in the house notwithstanding they have slaves and servants enough to do it." No finer picture exists in all literature than that drawn by the Tamil Poet-Saint, Tiru-valluvar, of the householder leading on earth a consecrated life, just in all his dealings, love the very life of his soul, strict with himself, patient and kindly to all, simple in living, liberal in his benefactions, dreading the touch of evil, self-controlled and pure.

We have travelled far from these standards, certainly in the towns. Look at the houses in the Cinnamon Gardens, the utterly bourgeois ideal they enshrine, the

vulgar show and frippery, aping the villadom of a fifth-rate English town. They spread their poisonous influence far and wide, and are the greatest obstacle to that simplification of life which is our country's most urgent need. It is deplorable that, in Ceylon, English education has so multiplied our wants, increased the complexity of our life and demoralized us, that those who ought to be indefatigable and devoted in her service, spend the greater part of their time in earning money for the supply of those wants and spend their leisure not in intellectual culture or public work but in trivialities. But the Reform Movement and the Ceylon Social Service League have wrought a great change. This very Conference is a standing proof.

I make a special appeal to the young men and women of Ceylon. The youth of a nation, said Lord Beaconsfield, are the trustees of posterity. I have an unquenchable faith in the youth of Ceylon. Youth is the time of noble impulses and generous aspirations, and our youth have behind them centuries of inherited culture and great traditions. I believe that they will soon find their souls and, leaving mere money-making and wallowing in ease to the baser sort, will revert to the ideals of their forefathers and establish an aristocracy of intellect, character and self-sacrificing service. Until this is achieved, political reforms and

power are of little use. Suppose Ceylon won even such a place in the world as Japan has. What would it profit us, with the canker of Materialism gnawing at our vitals?

I look to our youth to spiritualise public life, and I believe they will do it. They will each see his own well-being in the well-being of all, will identify his own life with the life of all and his own interest with the interest of all. They will lay at the feet of our dear Mother-land the love-offerings of passionate service. They will work in unity that, in the words of Dante, all the intellectual and spiritual forces diffused among men may obtain the highest possible development in the sphere of thought and action. With our youth inspired by such a spirit and such ideals, I look to see our country rise with renewed splendour, paling the glory of Parakrama Bahu the Great and a beacon-light to all lands.

## V. Case for Constitutional Reform

*[The following "Case for Constitutional Reform in Ceylon" was prepared by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in August, 1919, and published in the following month by the Joint Committee of the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association]*

1. Ceylon enjoyed for twenty centuries autonomous government and a high degree of civilization and is the spiritual leader of the Buddhist world of Asia. The Sinhalese and Tamils, who form over 90% of the population, have lived here from of old in amity or at feud but now for three centuries in friendship and harmony, the Tamils reinforced during the last seven decades by streams of immigrants from South India who are the mainstay of the Tea and Rubber Industry of the Island. Parts of the coast were seized and occupied by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. But- the inhabitants maintained a fierce and continuous struggle with the foreigner, drove him out with the help of the Dutch and compelled the latter to enter into treaty with the King of Ceylon, whose Capital was at Kandy, and to hold the territory under him. In 1796 this maritime territory passed, with his

co-operation, from the Dutch to the British, while the bulk of the Island remained under his rule.

2. In 1809 Sir Alexander Johnston, Chief Justice and First Member of the King's Council, having been deputed by the Government to make an enquiry into the history and conditions of the people, recommended the creation of a Legislative Assembly on the lines of the British House of Commons, with elected representatives for each province. This recommendation was accepted by the Secretary of State and was about to be given effect to, when a Cabinet change occurred in England and the measure was shelved.

3. In 1815 the people of Ceylon, being dissatisfied with their King, invited the British to their Capital. At the great Convention held at Kandy on the 2nd of March, 1815, between the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Sir Robert Brownrigg as representative of King George III., and the Chiefs and representatives of the people, the King of Ceylon was deposed and the whole Island was surrendered to the British Government with full reservation of the people's rights and privileges which were guaranteed by the Government, the King of Great Britain being substituted in the

Constitution for the late Sri Vickrama Raja Sinha and his descendants.

4. The Constitutional rights thus guaranteed were as follows:-

(i) Every village administered its affairs through its Council composed of the head of every family within its limits, however low his rank or small his property. The Ceylon village was a true type of the Village Community that has been discovered by the researches of Maine, Maurer, Nasse and others among the Aryan peoples of Europe and Asia. Now here in the world was it found flourishing so vigorously and so recently as in Ceylon. It provided fully for internal government, for police, for the administration of justice, for the cultivation of land, for public works, for the apportionment of taxes and public duties, for protection against the aggression of outsiders, etc. The Village Council is still part of our Constitution, but greatly shorn of its powers and a mere puppet in the hands of the Officials.

(ii) Each Village Council sent its delegate to the District Council, which continued to exist within living memory.

(iii) Above the Village Council and the District Council was the Supreme Council of the Ministers of State, and

(iv.) The King, who was considered the elected Supreme Magistrate, the form of election being gone through even in the most reactionary times and down to the last of Ceylon's Kings.

5. The Royal Commissioners of Enquiry of 1829-1831 after careful investigation framed a Constitution for Ceylon, which came into force in March, 1833. It consisted of an Executive and a Legislative Council, the latter comprising official and unofficial members nominated by the Governor. This was expressly put forward by the Commissioners as a temporary measure. "Such a Council," they said, "is not proposed as an institution calculated in itself to provide effectually for the legislation of the Island at a more advanced stage of its progress . . . . It would eventually constitute an essential part of any colonial legislature for which the Island may be prepared at a future period." They added: "The peculiar circumstances of Ceylon, both physical and moral, seem to point it out to the British Government as the fittest spot in our Eastern Dominions in which to plant the germ of European civilization, whence we may not

unreasonably hope that it will spread to the whole of those vast territories."

6. There has been a continuous demand from the last century for a substantial reform of the Constitution. But little or no change has been made. In the eighties two Unofficial Members nominated by the Governor were added. In 1910, for the first time, provision was made for election, one elected member to represent the permanent inhabitants (over 4,000,000), two members for 7,500 Europeans, and one member for 25,000 persons of mixed European descent. The Legislative Council thus consists of twelve officials (all Europeans), four elected members (of whom only one is for the permanent population) and six Un-official Members nominated by the Governor. The Executive Council consists of eight officials, all Europeans. Local self-government has received little encouragement and is represented by three Municipalities created in 1865 and a number of Local Boards, Village Councils, etc., which are all entirely under official European control and in which the Unofficial Members have little power.

7. The administration of the affairs of the Island is thus, even in the smallest matters, in the hands of European officials and their army of subordinate



native officials, ill paid, or more often, unpaid, who lord it over the people-a sad contrast to the powers and privileges which, as shown in para 4 above, they enjoyed under their own Kings.

8. Robert Knox, after living 20 years among the Sinhalese in the latter part of the seventeenth century, speaks highly of their education, refinement, independence, and self-confidence. " The ordinary ploughman," he says, "had the elegant manners and the elegant speech of the courtier," and he quotes with approval the peasants' saying: "Take a ploughman from the plough, wash off his dirt, and he is fit to rule a kingdom."

9. The people of Great Britain cannot view with satisfaction the decline of such a people under their administration. Certain classes have, no doubt, prospered greatly-the merchant, the broker, the lawyer, the capitalist, the big landowner and others. But the masses, the peasant and the labourer, who produce the Island's wealth, have had little share of this prosperity and have been reduced to the position of helpless wage earners struggling for a bare existence. If for them and for all there were a tenfold more plenteous harvest of material wealth and comfort, could it or anything compensate for the dwarfing and

stunting of their powers and capacities, for the weakening of their native wit and fibre, for the loss of virility and self-respect ? How far does this fulfil the first maxim of British statesmen, that British administration should operate as an elevating force on the character of the people? Even admitting the claim of efficiency made on behalf of the administration, the people cannot live on efficiency alone, and (in the words of Lord Chelmsford and Mr. Montagu) "efficiency may be too dearly purchased at the price of moral inanition."

10. The European bureaucracy is, with rare exceptions, out of touch with the people. In 1915 it thoroughly misunderstood some local disturbances such as occur in every part of the British Empire, saw in them a deep conspiracy against British Rule, and resorted to violent measures under Martial Law, resulting in the summary execution of hundreds of innocent persons and the punishment by Courts Martial of hundreds of others. The Governor responsible for these measures was recalled and his successor, Sir John Anderson, declared that there was not the slightest stain on the loyalty of the people and that some of the measures adopted had been Hunnish in their violence and injustice and "deserve" the

loathing and disgust of every decent Englishman". Yet the offenders were not punished, being protected by an Act of Indemnity fraudulently obtained from the Imperial Government; and the Royal Commission of Enquiry, demanded by the people as well as by 40 Members of Parliament (including three Bishops) and others of the standing of the Master of Balliol, has not yet been granted. The loyal and long-suffering people of Ceylon have thus been left with serious grievances unredressed, the fair name of Britain has been dishonoured by the misconduct of her servants, and the system of administration which made it possible remains as vigorous as ever. The events of 1915 show in a striking manner its inefficiency and unwisdom. Less glaring instances may be adduced from the everyday administration, which, in the words of a European resident, is characterized by "decades of ineptitude, *laisser-aller*, lack of method and initiative, and superannuated systems which have kept Ceylon back half a century."

11. The Royal Commissioners, when in 1831 they declared Ceylon to be "the fittest spot" in the British Dominions of the East for the realization of British ideals, could hardly have anticipated the slow rate at which those responsible for the administration of Ceylon have carried out that policy. To say that

Ceylon, the home of an ancient civilization, is, after more than a hundred years of British Rule, fit for nothing better than a Crown Colony administration is absurd, and, if true, would be discreditable to the British Rule. But it is not true. The following figures show the great strides, material and moral, which Ceylon has made since 1834, the first year of the establishment of the Legislative Council, compared with the figures for 1917, the latest year for which the figures are available:

Year	Population	Revenue	Expenditure	Exports	Imports	Tonnage shipping entered and cleared	Schools	Scholars
		£	£	£	£			
1834	1,167,700	377,952	334,835	145,834	372,726	153,510	1,105	13,891
1917	4,475,922	4,465,458	4,289,041	20,462,996	12,343,058	6,153,778	4,213	395,810

12. But the political status of Ceylon has not changed. Compare with her the Philippines under the United States rule. A heterogeneous population (Malay, Chinese, Spanish, Negro and hybrid; Mohammedan, Christian, Buddhist and Animist; tree-dweller, head-hunter and cannibal), a population neglected through three centuries of Spanish misrule, was so ruled as to be deemed fit within a decade, for an Upper House of

8 Commissioners (four Americans and four Philipinos) under the presidency of an American Governor-General, a Legislative Assembly of 81 elected members, an elected Governor for each of its 38 Provinces and elected Presidents and Councillors for its 350 towns. This Constitution was changed in 1916, within another decade, to full self-government with promise of independence in the near future.

13. Ceylon does not ask for independence, but for self-government as an integral part of the British Empire, on the same lines as Canada Australia, South Africa, or Newfoundland and she maintains that by her history and civilization by the practice of self-government through the centuries, by the progress she has made even under the present cramping conditions and by her loyalty to the British Throne, she is fully ripe for such government and is entitled to it. By granting it Great Britain will be redeeming not only the pledges given to the people of Ceylon when they came under the British Crown in 1815, but also the pledges given to the whole world during the war to carry into effect the ideals she has championed of liberty, self-development, and self-determination for all peoples, great and small, whether within the Empire or without.

14. Those ideals the British Government has unfortunately not been able to realize in India, to the great disappointment of a large section of the Indian people, resulting in a wide-spread propaganda of suspicion of the sincerity of the Government, a suspicion which constitutes a political danger. The difficult and complicated problems with which the Government is faced in India do not exist in Ceylon, and the grant of self-government to her will prove to India and the world Britain's good faith and loyalty to her pledges, besides satisfying the pressing needs and claims of Ceylon.

15. In the event of the Imperial Government not being prepared to grant Ceylon at the present moment her prayer for full self-government, she asks, as a provisional measure, to be granted (with necessary modifications) the Constitution which Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, has recommended for that Presidency. (See Letter of his Government, dated 11th November, 1918, and included in the Indian Reform Papers presented to the House of Commons.) A Constitution which is recommended by responsible authorities for the

Presidency of Bombay should be the minimum for Ceylon. The leading features of it\* are as follows:-

(a) The Executive Council to consist of four members in addition to the Governor and of the four, three to be Indians (two at least being chosen from the elected members of the Legislative Council) and to be in charge of Departments. (For "Indians" substitute "Ceylonese" in the case of Ceylon.)

(b) A largely increased Legislative Council with a substantial elected majority of four-fifths. (instead of two-thirds as in other residencies), the remaining one-fifth consisting of Official Members and of Unofficial Members nominated by the Governor to represent important minorities and other interests.

(c) No division into reserved and transferred subjects either in the Executive Council or in the Legislative Council.

(d) All legislation and resolutions to be subject to the veto of the Governor in cases in which he considers the peace, order, and safety of the State are at stake.

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\* Particulars taken from the Letter as published in the Hindu of Madras, of 12th July, 1919.

16. The Indian Reform Bill now before the House of Commons has, according to Mr. Montagu, been so drafted as to enable progressive Governments, like that of Lord Willingdon to give effect to their liberal policy.'

(e) The members of the Legislative Council of Ceylon should (it is submitted) be elected on the basis of a territorial electorate with a wide franchise (say, male adult) and a restricted female franchise.

(f) The number of elected members should be about 40 (*i.e.* in the ratio of about one to every 100,000 inhabitants) and of the nominated official and unofficial members about ten.

(g) The Council should elect its own Speaker, the present arrangement under which the Governor is *ex-officio* President having proved, as anticipated by the Royal Commissioners detrimental to the independence and efficiency of the Council and to the dignity of the office of the King's Representative.

(h) The Council should have full budget control as at present, and no Grand Committees as proposed for India.



(i) The veto of the Governor in *(d)* should be subject to an appeal to a Standing Committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider Ceylon affairs, provided that on the expiration of six months after the passing of the measure or resolution vetoed it is re-affirmed in substance by the Council.

17. The higher appointments in the Ceylon Civil Service and other branches of the public service are now almost exclusively filled by Europeans, though there is an abundance of Ceylonese talent and efficiency. Not only are the people thus denied the satisfaction of legitimate ambitions and a just distribution of places of honour and emolument, but the experience and knowledge gained in the higher branches of the Public Service are carried away by every retiring European official and are absolutely lost to Ceylon to its great detriment. It is, therefore, urged that at least a percentage of 50 per cent rising to 75 per cent of these appointments be reserved for Ceylonese.

18. It is not, however, desired merely to substitute a Ceylonese bureaucracy for a European bureaucracy. Though the substitution would secure in the administration knowledge, sympathy and efficiency, it would not, so long as the ultimate control is not in the hands of the people, advance that spirit of liberty and

self-development, that truly responsible government, which is the desire of Ceylon and the glory of England and of her self-governing Dominions. Therefore, Ceylon demands the reform of the Executive and of the Legislative Councils on the lines indicated. She demands also that in merely local administration—which is of great importance to the average citizen and especially to the poor man, with whose life it is intertwined at every turn—there should be complete popular control, that Municipal Councils and other local bodies, urban and rural down to the Village Councils, should be multiplied throughout the Island, with elected Chairmen and elected majorities and full control of local affairs.

19. Each person thus taking his share in the burden of responsibility for the country's welfare, men's lives will be enriched, their personality developed, they will recover the self-confidence and self-respect they have lost under the baneful influence of a Crown Colony Administration. Ceylon will become again self-governing, strong and respected at home and abroad, and will be a source of strength instead of weakness to the Empire, whose unity and solidarity will become a real, living fact when it is based on complete local autonomy and respect for the rights and privileges of all its subjects

## VI. Address to Sinhalese Conference

*(The following "Address" was delivered by Sir Ponnambalam at a Sinhalese Conference held at the Tower Hall Colombo, on 20th September, 1919. The Conference was for the purpose of organising People's Associations throughout the Island for political, social, and economic improvement)*

Gentlemen,-On behalf of the conveners of this Conference I thank you for the hearty response you have made to our invitation and for your attendance here in such large numbers. It shows that you realize the significance of this Conference, one of the most important ever held in Ceylon. We have met here to-day to organise a movement in the Sinhalese districts of the Island-a movement for the Tamil districts will follow-to form People's Associations throughout the Island for political, social and economic improvement. Work of this kind has been left largely to English-educated persons, but we wish to reach the great masses of the people. They have shown in the Temperance Campaign of the last few years an amount of enthusiasm, strenuous energy and public spirit which has not been equalled by the English-educated classes. We wish to revive in the people the interest they took of old in matters of public concern

and to recover for them the power to shape and manage their affairs.

It is one of the saddest aspects of our national life that the administration of the country under Great Britain has been so centralized, no doubt with the best of intentions, that the masses of the people have been deprived of all power and interest in the administration of the affairs of their villages and towns and are almost like cattle, driven at the pleasure of their official masters, tended by good ones, and kicked by bad. Throughout the greater part of the Island little is done by a private individual without invoking the aid of the Government Agent or his Assistant, who gives it or withholds it after an enquiry through a succession of headmen -Mudaliyar or Ratemahatmaya, Muhandiram or Korala and minor headmen. This system has increased to a dangerous degree the power of headmen and their opportunity of abusing it and has retarded the progress of the people by reducing them, especially in the country districts, to a state of helpless dependence.

I remember, when I was District Judge of Kurunegala, a visit was made to that district by the Governor, Sir Arthur Havelock. He mentioned to me with surprise that the people round about one of the tanks he visited

actually complained to him that the weeds grew among the paddy in their fields! I replied that this was the natural result of the Grandmotherly Government under which we -live. It left little to the people's initiative or enterprise and prevented them from growing up self-reliant and vigorous, and at the same time imposed a great burden of work on the conscientious Government Official in watching over these "children" and protecting them from the oppression of headmen and others.

There is no need for you to be treated as children. It is not as if the Sinhalese and the Tamils were a race of ignorant savages to whom the first glimpse of civilization came with the arrival of the Portuguese, the Dutch or the British. Your civilization goes back at least 2,000 years. Long before the modern great nations of the West had emerged from barbarism or even come into existence, you had a well-organised social and political life. You had a beautiful literature, highly developed arts, great irrigation works and religious edifices that vie with the greatest in the world, an army and navy, and everything that constitutes a civilization of a high order. King Parakrama Bahu the First did what Professor Rhys Davids doubts if any contemporary monarch in Europe or Asia could have carried out successfully or even conceived. He sent a

fleet of transports 1,500 miles from home to the further side of the open Bay of Bengal, to plant his victorious standards in Kambojya and Ramanya. You fought European armies heroically for three centuries, maintaining your independence to the end.

That heroic spirit would still be manifest if you had the opportunity. Your Tamil fellow subjects were given that opportunity during the recent war in Mesopotamia, and British officers have declared that they so acquitted themselves as to be equal to the best British infantry regiments. In the villages you managed your affairs without interference from officials. In every village there was a Village Council composed of the head of every family within its limits, however low his rank or small his property, and charged with the whole sphere of internal government, with police, with the administration of justice, with the cultivation of lands, with the construction and maintenance of public works, with the apportionment of taxes, public duties etc., and the village headman was appointed by them and was the servant of the people and not, as now, their master and often tyrant.

Can you recognise this Village Council in the Gansabhawa and Village Committees now existing in the country, which say *Ehei Hamuduruwane* to the

Mudaliyar, the President or the Government Agent, and merely register his wish? You had District Councils to which every Village Council sent its delegate. Above them you had, for the management of the great affairs of State and as a final Court of Appeal, the Supreme Council of the Ministers of State presided over by the King, who was himself an elected officer, the form of election being gone through even in the most reactionary times and down to the last of Ceylon's Kings, when you deposed Sri Vikrama Raja Sinha and elected in his place the King of England.

I see that in the New Bill which has been published for the reform of local government, there is provision made for elected majorities and elected Chairmen in the Urban District Councils. This is all to the good and should be extended to Municipal Councils without delay. But the fatal blot in the Bill is the practical extinction of the ancient Village Councils, which under our native Kings were our glory and our salvation, and their submersion in a new-fangled system of Rural District Councils unknown to East or West and entirely under official control. If this Bill becomes law, the rural population, which is about nine-tenths of the total population, will remain more than ever under the heavy yoke of officialdom. There is absolutely no reason for differentiating between the townsman and

the villager. If anything, the differentiation should be in favour of the villager.

Mr. A. G. Fraser, the Principal of Trinity College, Kandy, who knows Ceylon well, wrote the other day: "There is usually more political and practical governing sense in the workers on the land than in the town employee. The villager has got a great deal of shrewd common-sense and yet lies more open to exploitation and injustice than most other sections of the community. So he most needs the vote. Not only does he need it most, but I believe he would soon become the best voter." Robert Knox, an Englishman, who lived among your countrymen up-country for twenty years in the latter part of the XVIIIth Century, speaks highly of their education, refinement, independence and self-confidence. The ordinary ploughman, he says, had the elegant manner and the elegant speech of the courtier, and he quotes with approval the peasants' saying: "Take a ploughman from the plough, wash off his dirt, and he is fit to rule a kingdom."

Of what other nation in the world could this be said? Even under the present conditions there is no doubt that the peasantry in Ceylon is, unlike the peasantry of Western countries, exceedingly intelligent and even cultured. It is these people whom it is now sought to



disqualify even for the management of local affairs. We must all vigorously protest against it and see that you in the country districts have the same powers and privileges and even more than are given to the people in the urban districts where, after all, the population is a floating, mongrel population, having no common bond except the payment of taxes, while in the villages there is a common life and civilization rooted in the past and in the present.

Instead of destroying or weakening the Gansabhawas, we must restore to them their ancient powers and privileges in all their fulness, so that they shall be complete masters in the administration of their village affairs which they know best and in the good administration of which they have the greatest interest. Whatever changes are made, if they are to be beneficial, should be based on our ancient life and institutions and customs, and not on the pattern of foreign and not yet assimilated institutions or on the caprice of constitution-mongers who neither know the East nor sympathise with the true spirit of the West. Not only must we insist that your Village Councils should have and exercise real manhood suffrage (which they have nominally now), and should have full and effective control over rural affairs, but with Mr. Fraser we must insist that you should have manhood

suffrage for the election of members to the Legislative Council, so that you may be able to make your voice felt in the bigger affairs of State and protect your interests effectively.

If you had such a voice, would you have been treated as you were during the months of 1915 when Government got into a panic and lost its head, and Europeans, official and unofficial, behaved like Huns let loose in Belgium? Would so many innocent persons have been put to death, imprisoned and fined? Would the enquiry which you have demanded into those outrages be still denied to you? You must not, however, take that orgy of misrule as a type of British administration or those offenders as specimens of true Englishmen. In fact, during all the years that have since elapsed, those outrages have been condemned by none more severely and enquiry and redress demanded by none more strenuously than by Englishmen. In addition to other representations, both in Parliament and outside, a special memorial to the Secretary of State from leading Englishmen, including 40 Members of Parliament and three Bishops of the Church of England, was submitted.

You must not be disappointed or lose heart because the enquiry has not yet been granted. The great pre-

occupations of the War have stood in the way of your getting a hearing. You must not relax your efforts for a Royal Commission. In the early part of this year similar outrages were committed by British officials in the Punjab, and the people of India maintained their agitation so vigorously that already a Commission has been appointed to inquire into those matters and give redress. So must you also work vigorously and never cease until you get your Commission. The heart of the British people is sound and loathes oppression and injustice and has only to be fully informed of your grievances, and then you will obtain such redress as will to some extent compensate you for the sufferings you have endured and you will obtain such retribution for the offending officials and non-officials as will for ever prevent a recurrence of events unworthy of the British name.

It is in order to protect the interests of the people and to promote their welfare politically, socially, and economically, by means of People's Associations formed throughout the Island that this Conference has been called. And I feel sure that you will all work zealously to make this movement a thorough success, in the interests of yourselves and your families and of our dear Motherland of Lanka. The organisation of this movement we owe largely to the public spirit,

energy and enterprise of Mr. F. R. Senanayake who is well-known to you all for his philanthropic work, especially in the cause of Temperance and still more in connection with the Misrule of 1915. He spared neither himself nor his purse in these great public movements. Ceylon would be happy indeed if we had more such men of wealth and public spirit, but, unfortunately, what appeal most to our wealthy men are titles and honours and offices from Government, and for these things they do not sometimes scruple to sacrifice even the welfare of their countrymen. No man is better fitted to preside over this Conference than Mr. Senanayake. I am very pleased that you have elected him President.

## **VII. The Present Political Situation I**

*[The following Address was delivered by Sir Ponnambalam at the Tower Hall, Colombo, on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1919]*

Almost a year has now passed since our last National Conference met and submitted to the Imperial and Local Governments our views on the Reforms needed in the constitution and administration of Ceylon. The Conference laid down in its resolutions the general principles and outlines of the reforms asked for, without going into details, as had been done in the

Memorial adopted by the Conference of the previous year, and in the Memorials of the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association. The details must necessarily vary from time to time, but the fundamental demand is that the management of all our domestic affairs should be left in our hands; subject to the supervision of the Secretary of State and the guidance of the Governor.

We have had enough of the benevolent despotism of a Crown Colony administration for a century-and-a-quarter, and we will no longer consent to be treated like little children and our whole destiny left in the hands of an autocratic and unsympathetic bureaucracy, however well intentioned. The Conference of last December emphatically and truly declared that the present system is unsuited to our needs and conditions and inconsistent with British ideals, hinders our development and progress and is detrimental to our welfare, and that a reform is imperatively needed and a vigorous development of self-governing institutions with a view to the realization of Responsible Government in Ceylon as an integral part of the British Empire.

The Conference demanded a more liberal scheme of reform than that set forth by the Secretary of State for

India and the Viceroy in their Report of April, 1918, as necessary for India; an enlarged and re-constituted Legislative Council with a substantial majority of members elected on the basis of a territorial electorate, with a broad franchise and with safeguards for minorities; a reformed Executive Council with half the number of its members Ceylonese elected members of the Legislative Council and in charge of Departments; complete popular control of Municipal Councils and other local bodies, urban and rural, with a majority of elected members and an elected Chairman; and a substantial proportion, rising to 75% per cent, of the higher appointments for Ceylonese.

Since that Conference some important developments have occurred, of which we must take note. In March last, the Ceylon European Association published its Report, showing a far different spirit and attitude towards reform than their countrymen in India, an intelligent grasp of the problem and a genuine desire to deal with it in a worthy manner. The Association naturally does not see eye to eye with us and commits itself to opinions and conclusions which we cannot share. But the Report should put to shame those opponents of reform who regard criticism of our Government and Constitution as impiety and constitutional aspirations as sedition, men whose spirit

of negation is impervious to the spirit of the time and to changing needs, sees only the difficulties and dangers which change involves and prefers to take the risk of stopping the clock, lest it should go too fast.

Among these reactionaries are some honest Tories, like my old friend, Mr. Francis Beven. Differences of opinion, if genuine as his are, are rather to be welcomed; they are evidence of life in a community and prevent stagnation. The opposition includes also a number of men who have no settled conviction except that of pleasing the powers-that-be, of basking in their smiles and winning more substantial boons for themselves and their kin. As the good Emperor Marcus Aurelius said: "The universe hath need even of such men as these." Then, in April, we had a remarkable contribution to the discussion from the Rev. Mr. A. G. Fraser, a lifelong labourer for the welfare of our people, who has left his mark in the history of our country.

With his intimate knowledge of the people, and coming from the field of war and from living contact with great currents of thought and feeling that are sweeping through Great Britain and other countries and creating a new world, he is able to speak with an authority which cannot be ignored. In May, the

Government of India published the Reports of the Southborough Committees (which had been appointed by the Imperial Government to work out the details of the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme) and published also their own views and the views of the principal local Governments. Last, but not least, the India Reform Bill introduced by Mr. Montagu has passed its second reading in the House of Commons and is now under consideration of a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament, and we read from day to day in the Press reports the evidence of witnesses examined by the Committee.

How different, how deplorably different, is the position of the people of Ceylon! The Governor is still brooding over a scheme. We are absolutely in the dark as to the lines on which it is being framed. Questions in the House of Commons, equally with local inquiries, have failed to elicit even the probable time when it will see the light of day, or whether, following the Indian precedent, it will be published for general information and discussion before a final decision is taken. Through the efforts of our friends in the House of Commons we have at last been able to learn that the Governor has sent in a Report, which is under the consideration of the Secretary of State and under correspondence with the local Government. He has



refused to receive a deputation which we nominated.\* It is rumoured, I cannot say with what truth, that the Report has been sent back to the Governor to be drafted on fresh lines.

What were the lines on which he first proceeded and what the fresh lines on which he is now to proceed, remain equally a mystery. The people of Ceylon, who are the persons most vitally interested in the matter, cannot understand why it is wrapped up in this profound secrecy and why they should be obliged to wander in a region of conjecture. This policy of mystery and procrastination is causing grave public uneasiness and anxiety which a wise Government would do its best to avoid. The Indian Government considered "time as a factor of vital importance in the reform question" and, though they had to deal with a population of over 300 millions and with problems of infinite difficulty and complexity, have framed their scheme, have courted publicity and criticism, have admitted the benefit of such criticism, and amended their scheme and are carrying it through Parliament. But the Ceylon scheme for a small population of 4 millions, singularly free from difficult problems, is still

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\*A cable, since received from London, states that Viscount Milner has agreed to receive the deputation.

being hatched in silence and secrecy. Let us hope that it will not in the end turn out to be an addled egg.

Our friends in England have reason to believe that, if the present Secretary of State, Viscount Milner, had the opportunity of dealing with it, he would do so in a far more satisfactory manner than his predecessor. Lord Milner is not a Tory country gentleman owing his position to party exigencies and content to be led by his subordinates in Downing Street. He is one of the best products of Oxford culture, has risen on his own merits, has administered great Dominions of the Empire, is accustomed to deal with Imperial questions, and has breathed the bracing atmosphere of the Peace Conference in which he was a prominent figure. But in the rapidly shifting scenes of British politics he may shortly make his exit from the Colonial Office, and it may happen that, when at last the scheme is worked out locally after secret discussions with Downing Street, some paltry reforms will be thrust on us and we shall be told that it is too late to alter or to discuss them.

Let us, therefore, be on the alert. Not only must we have a voice in the shaping of the reforms, but they must be in harmony with the repeated pledges of the Imperial Government in favour of liberty, self-

government, self-determination. The Premier, Mr. Lloyd George, speaking at Glasgow last year, said: "The wishes, desires and interests of the people themselves must be the dominant factor in settling their future Government." Do our officials realise this and are they prepared to act upon it?

There is, unfortunately, a wide-spread feeling in the country, which has not been weakened by twelve months' experience of the Governor's administration, that his training as a military man and as an official in regions remote from the quickening influences of English public life does not pre-dispose him to look very sympathetically on reform. Let us sincerely hope that this is a misjudgment of him and that he will belie these fears. His local advisers in the Civil Service are believed to be even less pervious to the new spirit thrilling through the world and to the feelings and wishes of our people, nor is much expected from the permanent officials of Downing Street. Mr. Montagu asked in the House of Commons the other day: "Whoever heard of political reforms in England coming from the Civil Service? The House of Commons is the place for political reforms. The policy which the Civil Service must carry out must be dictated to it in the House of Commons."

The Ceylon European Association has condemned the Colonial Office administration and suggested an Advisory Council, including members from Ceylon, to keep it from blundering. At the annual meeting of the Rubber Growers Association in London last May, the President, Sir John Anderson, scoffed at the Colonial Office as out of date and as a principal cause of much of our inefficient administration, and insisted that the system must be changed and that Ceylon must have a representative in the House of Commons to voice her wishes and guard her interests.

Neither of the proposed remedies is likely to be effective. It would be difficult to get a really efficient representative of Ceylon to accept a seat in the Advisory Council or in the House of Commons, nor if he did could he be of much use. Indian friends of mine, who have been members of the Council of the Secretary of State for India, have told me how little they can do for India. They are nonentities without power or authority, and part of the great sham which seeks to delude our people with toys. What good is it to the people of India to have an Indian in the House of Lords and as Under-Secretary of State for India, when the people are suffering unheard-of outrages under Martial Law, when *lettres-de-cachet* and internments without trial are part of the ordinary

administration, when life, liberty and property are at the mercy of the secret Police, and Rowlatt Acts and Indemnity Acts are the order of the day?

There are men who would jump at the opportunity of getting into Downing Street or the House of Commons and cutting a dash in the Metropolis of the Empire, but they are not the men we want. Really good men would be loth to go into exile in Europe and be mere figure-heads. In practice the place will fall to some European returned from the Tropics to spend the evening of his life in England and out of touch with our needs and wishes and as likely as not to injure Ceylon as her representative. Again, in the House of Commons, what can one man do against hundreds? Look at the Labour Party in the House. In spite of their being the largest party there in opposition, and of their being far the most powerful party in the country they can do nothing in the House. To make their influence felt they have to rely on outside forces, on their great Labour organisations and what is called "direct action," strikes paralysing national industry.

No, gentlemen, the remedy for our ills is not to be found in England, but here in Ceylon and only here. It is absurd to expect the Secretary of State or the British Parliament to find the time to look after our

affairs. Even if they could find the time, they are absolutely disqualified by their ignorance of us. But the "weary Titan" has quite enough and more than enough to do to look after affairs nearer home. Observe how little he is able to do there and how bitter and widespread the cry of maladministration throughout Great Britain. He can only wring his hands, and helplessly survey the chaos all around him. More than ever he is obliged to leave everything in the Colonies in the hands of the "man on the spot." We know that gentleman and his doings too well. Let the misrule and outrages of 1915, the gravity of our food question, the poverty and misery of the masses of our people, the incompetence and helplessness of the every-day administration answer for him.

There will be, there can be, no improvement until the people have a predominant voice in the management of their affairs, until the bureaucracy, whether European or Ceylonese, come under the control of the people, realise that they are not the lords and masters, but the servants of the people, until they take pride in the service, make the people's welfare their sole aim and end and work intelligently, wholeheartedly and strenuously for that end. It is as a means to that end that we have asked for a substantial reform of our constitution and administration. We have

within the last few days framed and submitted to Government, on behalf of the Ceylon Reform League and the Ceylon National Association, our final views in the "Case for Constitutional Reform in Ceylon" about which I shall speak to you presently.

Last Saturday saw the birth of a great movement for the organization of People's Associations throughout the Island. Those of you who were so fortunate as to be present at the monster meeting on that day, at this Tower Hall, of delegates from all the Sinhalese provinces and to observe the enthusiasm, the eloquence, the reasoned conviction with which the speakers pleaded in their mother tongue the cause of Reform and the pressing need for it, must have felt that a great day has indeed dawned for Ceylon.

Public movements in this Island are usually conducted in English in order to reach and influence the British authorities here and in England, and naturally therefore are led by the English-educated classes. They are mainly responsible for the Reform movement, and have propagated it among the people by means of the vernacular press and pamphlets and created widespread interest and discussion in the villages. The propaganda was scarcely necessary. The need for an effective share in the Government was brought home

to the people by bitter experience of the Misrule of 1915 and the failure to obtain redress,-their resentment intensified by the recent reinstatement of officers who had been singled out for condemnation by the Governor Sir John Anderson as well as by the Secretary of State-and they are more than ever in favour of reform and eager to take an active part.

The People's Associations now being formed will provide due outlets for their patriotism and public spirit and for expressing their views and wishes to the authorities, and at the same time a machinery for the safeguarding of their interests. This organization will restore to the people the habit, enjoyed for centuries under their own kings but lost under the excessively centralized British administration, of managing their own affairs. It will also give the lie to the statements made by designing persons and apparently believed in Downing Street, that the people are content with the present system of administration and are indifferent to reform and that representations to the contrary emanate from a handful of agitators.

This is the kind of fiction agreeable to the soul of an autocrat, from the Czar of all the Russias down to the pettiest village headman. How can our people be indifferent to the reform of the administration, having



eaten of its fruits in the bitter days of 1915 and again last year in Jaffna, and seen the blind folly and perversity of the bureaucracy and having had their simple faith in its wisdom and benevolence rudely shattered? Not that even now they are inappreciative of really good officials. What can be more touching than the attachment to men of the type of Mr. Freeman, who has just left us, held in little esteem by the Government, but rich in the people's affection and gratitude!

It is usual to speak of the upper and middle classes as the persons with a stake in the country. But the masses of the people have the largest stake; they suffer first and most from maladministration and have not the resources of the rich to mitigate its effects. They have the first claim on the attention of a Government and should have a weighty voice in the control of the administration. They had it under our kings for twenty centuries, being perhaps of all living nations the most fully endowed with a democratic system of local government. It fell into disuse under British Rule and still lingers in the Village Council, a poor shadow of its former self.

It is sad to think that under the new Local Government Bill this ancient institution which has in it the promise

and potency of vigorous national life and which we had hoped to see restored to its ancient glory and power, practically receives its death-blow, being submerged in a new-fangled system of Rural District Councils, masquerading as self-government, which threatens to lay on the rural population a yoke of officialdom heavier than ever. To the Urban District Councils the Bill grants an appreciable measure of self-government through the provision of elected majorities and elected unofficial Chairmen. This is a step in the right direction and will bear good fruit, if the Councils are not hampered by the Central Local Board, for whose mischievous interference ample opportunities and facilities are provided.

In this respect the Bill must be radically amended and the Board's power limited to advice and guidance. The Bill leaves severely alone our few Municipalities, which remain as official-ridden as when started over half-a-century ago, illustrating the deadly stagnation of Crown Colony Administration. Colombo, Kandy and Galle continue under an official Chairman and the elected members are few and helpless, while Bombay, which is almost the first city in the East, has had for years, with admirable results an unofficial chairman and 56 elected members to 16 nominated members. Kandy and Galle continue to be administered by a

Government Agent, who should have enough to do if he only looks after his legitimate provincial duties. The official head of the Municipality proves, not infrequently, a *roi faineant*, his work delegated to a subordinate officer or a pushing councillor who exercises power without responsibility and finds it fairly lucrative.

Why should not the power, the responsibility and the honour be given, as in Bombay, to a member elected by the suffrages of his colleagues ? The office would then be a worthy object of ambition to every citizen, and his fellow-citizens would know whom to hold responsible. Why should not towns like Jaffna and Moratuwa have the status of Municipalities with elected Chairmen and elected majorities? There is no lack of good men in our cities, and it is bad policy as well as sheer waste of power not to utilize their intelligence and public spirit but to leave them as idle spectators or carping critics.

I am, however, now chiefly concerned for the rural population who form the vast majority of our inhabitants. The differentiation in the new Bill between urban and rural districts rests on the Western notion that the rural population are ignorant boors by the side of townsmen. This may be true in large

measure of Western countries, but is not generally true of the East and certainly not of Ceylon. Our peasantry is remarkably intelligent, refined and even cultured, more so, I sometimes think, than some of us who look down on them, priding ourselves on our imported culture as on our imported clothes. Unlike the towns which have a floating, straggling, mongrel population, without link or coherence, our villagers have a common life and civilization rooted in the past and the present and were accustomed through the centuries to the practice of self-government.

The restoration of it to them in the fullest measure and their liberation from the paralysing influence of the Government Agent and from the exploitation and oppression of his headmen, is the most urgent need of the country. Not only must we insist that the Village Councils should be elected really, as now nominally, on manhood suffrage and should have full control over rural affairs but we must insist, with the Rev. A. G. Fraser, who knows our people, that they should have manhood suffrage in the election of members of the Legislative Council. Then alone will the peasant and the labourer, who are the heart of our country and the source of our wealth and prosperity, receive their due and be able to breathe freely and work out their develop

The point to be remembered by the authorities is that we do not want more opportunities of talk. We are sick of it, whether on the official or the unofficial side. We want power and responsibility. It will not satisfy us or meet our needs to have a few more elected members in the Legislative Council, one or two Ceylonese in the Executive Council and in charge of departments, and more Ceylonese in high offices. It is not for these loaves and fishes we are striving. Our demands and the reasons therefor have been set forth concisely in our "Case for Constitutional Reform" which I see in the hands of some of you and which I commend to your careful study. I will not go over the ground it has well traversed. But I wish to call your attention to para. 16, which contains the gist of what we ask for.

"Ceylon does not ask for independence. Her history and civilization, the practice of self-government through the centuries, the progress she has made even under the present cramping conditions, and her loyalty to the British Throne would entitle her to claim full Self-Government As an integral part of the British Commonwealth of Nations along with Canada, Australia, South Africa or Newfoundland. As a provisional measure she asks that the Constitution which Lord WILLINGDON, the

Governor of Bombay, has recommended for that Presidency be granted to her with necessary modifications. (See Letter of his Government dated 11th November, 1918,\* to the Government of India and included in the Indian Reform Papers presented to the House of Commons.) A Constitution which is recommended by responsible authorities for the Presidency of Bombay should be the minimum for Ceylon. The leading features of it suitable for Ceylon are as follows:-

(a) The Executive Council to consist of four members in addition to the Governor; and of the four, three to be Indians (two being chosen from the elected members of the Legislative Council) and to be in charge of departments. (For "Indians" substitute "Ceylonese" in the case of Ceylon.)

(b) A largely increased Legislative Council with a substantial elected

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\* Pages 178 et seq. of the volume on Indian Constitutional Reforms (published in 1919 by the Superintendent, Government Printing, Calcutta) containing the Government of India's Despatch of 5th March, 1919, and connected papers.

majority of four-fifths (instead of two-thirds as in other Presidencies) , the remaining one-fifth consisting of official members and of unofficial members nominated by the Governor to represent important minorities and other interests.

(c) No division into reserved and transferred subjects either in the Executive Council or in the Legislative Council.

(d) All legislation and resolutions to be subject to the veto of the Governor in cases in which he considers the peace, order and safety of the State are at stake.

(The Indian Reform Bill, now before the House of Commons, has, according to Mr. MONTAGU, been so drafted as to enable progressive governments, like that of Lord WILLINGDON, to give effect to their liberal policy.) The following modifications are necessary for Ceylon:-

(e) The members of the Legislative Council should be elected on the basis of a territorial electorate with a wide franchise (say, male adult) and a restricted female franchise.

(f) The number of elected members should be about 40 (*i.e.*, in the ratio of about one to every 100,000 inhabitants) and of the nominated official and unofficial members about ten.

(g) The Council should elect its own Speaker, the present arrangement under which the Governor is *ex-officio* President having proved, as anticipated by the Royal Commissioners, detrimental to the independence and efficiency of the Council and to the dignity of the office of the King's Representative.

(h) The Council should have full control, as at present, over the Budget and over the administration.

(i) The veto of the Governor in (d) should not be operative for more than



twelve months, and should not be repeated if on the expiration of that period the measure or resolution vetoed is passed in substance by the Council.

*(j)* The Governor should be one who has had Parliamentary experience and training in English public life and be thus qualified to discharge the duties of a constitutional, not as hitherto autocratic, ruler and to help in the smooth working of the political machinery under the altered conditions."

In paras 17 to 19 we have renewed our demands for a substantial percentage of higher appointments for the Ceylonese, for a multiplication and complete popular control of Municipalities and other local bodies, urban and rural. In the concluding para 20 we state our conception of Ceylon's future:-"Each person thus taking his share in the burden of responsibility for the country's welfare, men's lives will be enriched, their personality developed, they will recover the self-confidence and self-respect they have lost under the

baneful influence of a Crown Colony Administration. Ceylon will become again self-governing, strong and respected at home and abroad, will be knit to Great Britain in still closer bonds of affection and will be a source of strength to the Empire, whose unity and solidarity will become a real, living fact when it is based on complete local autonomy and respect for the rights and privileges of all its subjects."

The demands herein made do not constitute full self-government, which many of us think Ceylon is ripe for, but are the minimum we can feel justified in accepting as a step towards that goal. I believe they will be favourably entertained by British statesmen, for they are in earnest in the determination to realize the ideals of liberty, self-development and self-determination for all peoples. In India a powerful bureaucracy has largely defeated the generous intentions of the Imperial Government, to the great disappointment of the people, resulting in a wide-spread propaganda of suspicion of the sincerity of the Government and constituting a political danger.

The difficult and complicated problems of Indian administration do not exist in Ceylon. The grant of our

moderate demands will prove to India and the world Britain's good faith and loyalty to her pledges, besides satisfying the pressing needs and claims of Ceylon. It is, therefore, highly probable that we shall succeed in our prayer. If we do not, we shall not lose heart, we shall work all the harder and with renewed vigour. Our strength is in the justice of our cause, in our loyalty to the Throne, in the faith that England will be true to her ideals, and faith in ourselves.

The Labour Party, who best represent the British people, are almost certain to come into power at the next elections which are in sight, and they are pledged to grant self-government to India and Ceylon. We have staunch supporters among the leaders of that Party. The delays that now vex us may, after all, prove a blessing to Ceylon, for a Labour Government will not be niggardly, there will be no nicely calculated more or less, but a loyal and fearless carrying out of British ideals, such as has converted South Africa, a few years ago at war with Britain, into one of the props of her Empire. With the help of the Labour Party and of statesmen, Unionist as well as Liberal, true friends of freedom, and sustained by our own courage, energy and faith, we look forward with unabated confidence to the future.

## VIII. Address to National Congress

*[Sir Ponnambalam delivered the following Presidential Address at the first Session of the Ceylon National Congress held at the Public Hall, Colombo, on 11th December, 1919]*

**BROTHER AND SISTER DELEGATES,**

To-day Ceylon has realized the hopes and wishes of many years and hails the birth of the Ceylon National Congress. It is no small privilege for us to have lived to take part in this great gathering, which marks a memorable epoch in the history of our Island. You, who have worked for it with zeal and devotion, cannot but feel the liveliest satisfaction and joy. By the inauguration of this Congress we proclaim that we have done once for all with our petty differences and dissensions and that, whatever one's creed, race or caste may be if only in the memorable words of our Island Chronicle, the *Mahawansa*, he "makes himself one with the people," he is a true son of Lanka, a true Ceylonese, and entitled both to serve our dear Motherland to the best of his power and to enjoy in the fullest measure the advantages and benefits she offers.

To me the Congress is the fulfilment of dreams cherished from the time I was an undergraduate at Cambridge. During those never-to-be-forgotten days it was my good fortune to be a member of a College which has maintained the great traditions of Milton and Darwin, to live in intimate communion with youths of high ideals and intellectual calibre, to come under the influence of thinkers such as Sir John Seeley whose insight and learning have illuminated and fertilized modern history and politics. In the clash and interaction of minds in daily intercourse and discussion with fellow students and teachers-which is the most precious gift of a University to its alumni-, and under the spell of the vision of Italy newly risen from the torpor of centuries, there dawned in the minds of us, Oriental students, the idea of a national Renaissance of India and Ceylon.

The seed was then sowed which one of the noblest sons of India, Ananda Mohan Bose, with kindred souls nurtured till, a decade later, it blossomed into the great Indian National Congress with which the world is familiar. Under the same beneficent influence another dear friend, the late Justice Syed Mahmood of the Allahabad High Court, laid the plans of the great Mohammedan College of Aligarh, which is imperishably associated with the name of his illustrious

father, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, and has proved so potent a factor in the intellectual and political regeneration of the Mussalmans of India. Ceylon, which had become "a fen of stagnant waters," was scarcely accessible to these ideas. The enthusiasm of one or two youthful Ceylonese, who had been touched by the breadth of that spirit, was quenched in an atmosphere where comfortable moles with their barren optimistic sophistries ruled.

About the year 1876 a young Englishman from a small town in the neighbourhood of Cambridge, William Digby, joined the staff of the *Ceylon Observer*. He was poorly equipped with the world's goods, but was gifted with a large heart, a far-seeing vision, a profound faith in England's mission as the guardian of liberty, "a bulwark of the cause of man," whom

"No guile seduced, no force could violate,"

and with an indomitable resolution to help as far as he could in that mission. Taking up the mantle of another great Englishman, George Wall, the friend and champion of the peasantry of Ceylon and the sturdy defender of public rights, Digby became an ardent advocate of constitutional reform.

He set forth his views eloquently, together with a constructive scheme, in a pamphlet entitled "An Oriental Colony ripe for Representative Government." It was published in 1877, but, to his bitter disappointment, fell utterly flat on the Ceylon public. Shortly afterwards Digby left Ceylon to take up the editorship of a leading newspaper in Madras, and during the terrible Madras Famine rendered invaluable service which earned for him from the Sovereign the honour of a C. I.E. Transferring his activities to England, he edited influential journals, founded the Indian Political Agency in London, conducted *India*, the organ of the Indian National Congress, was Secretary of the National Liberal Club, London, and was made an Honorary Member of the Cobden Club in recognition of his successful efforts, in co-operation with George Wall and Governor Sir Arthur Havelock, in securing the abolition of grain taxes and revenue-farming in Ceylon. He died prematurely in 1904, to our and India's irreparable loss.

Four years later, when the reactionary administration of Sir Henry McCallum and his lieutenant, Sir Hugh Clifford, had at last roused Ceylon from her sleep, Digby's pamphlet being republished received its first meed of public recognition and appreciation. The

history of these later days in which Mr. James Peiris, Mr. H. J. C. Pereira and others played so prominent a part and wrested from a reluctant Government a slight measure of reform in the constitution of the Legislative Council, is well known. The popular discontent was not stemmed by this niggardly concession, and later received a vigorous impetus from the tragic events and misrule of 1915. The wave of constitutional agitation has marched on, and we are now almost on the crest. When our goal is reached and we rear our Valhalla, the names of these two Englishmen, George Wall and William Digby, will ever hold honoured places in that hall as now in our hearts.

It is difficult for us to understand the opposition of some of their countrymen in Ceylon to our Reform demands, which seek only to substitute for one form of British administration, which we have outgrown and which is impeding our development, another form more suitable to our needs and conditions. Our destinies are indissolubly bound up with England. We have the most perfect confidence that within her fold we can attain the fullest development of our national life, and that the obstacles placed in our path by officials and others, who are out of harmony with the great ideals of the King and his statesmen, will be swept away when once the true facts are placed before them



by a united people. Is not our very demand a proof of that confidence and a tribute of our affection?

Three quarters of a century ago Lord Macaulay said: "It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown the system, that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government and that, having been instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come, I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or to retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history." That long-looked-for day has arrived and should be welcome to every true Englishman as it is to us. The whole of our Reform movement is designed to impress this fact on the Government and people of Great Britain and on their servants here, and to indicate how best to utilize it for the happiness and contentment of the people of Ceylon and the stability of the Empire.

During the last five years it has fallen to me to speak and write often and at length on our aims and endeavours. My views are well known to you all and scarcely need repetition. They are in harmony with the "Case for Constitutional Reform in Ceylon" published last September and submitted to the Imperial and

Local Governments by the Ceylon National Association and the Ceylon Reform League. On the 20th of that month I addressed a monster Sinhalese Conference at Colombo and again on the 24th I spoke on the "Present Political Situation." To-day I must be brief, as we have a very heavy programme to go through and there is a large number of ladies and gentlemen of talent to address you.

When I last spoke, we were under a cloud of disappointment and our hearts were vexed-but, I am glad to say, by no means daunted-by the attitude of the authorities. Our repeated memorials and demands had been evaded and put off; questions in the House of Commons met with no better response; not an inkling was given of even the outlines of the Government policy in regard to Reform; the delegates whom we appointed to submit our views to the Secretary of State personally were refused a hearing. But we persevered, and our perseverance prevailed as it was bound to prevail.

Viscount Milner, as soon as he was put in possession of the true facts as regards the representative character of the delegates, received the Deputation most courteously. It was headed by Mr. H. J. C. Pereira, who put our case so forcibly and eloquently as to

impress Lord Milner and to elicit from him well-merited compliments. We cannot be sufficiently grateful to Mr. Pereira. Nor must we omit to express our deep gratitude to Mr. D. B. Jayatilaka and Mr. E. W. Perera for the invaluable service rendered to the people of Ceylon as their delegates during four years in England. We rejoice to welcome them all back home and to see them here to-day among us to inspire and invigorate us by their presence and example.

Lord Milner has deferred a final decision until he has had an opportunity of personally conferring with the Governor Sir William Manning in the spring. By one of the resolutions which will he put before you, you will be asked to take steps to nominate a fresh Deputation to proceed to England and keep in touch with the Secretary of State, the Parliament and the British People while the Reform measures are receiving their final shape in Downing Street. This is a very necessary precaution. Of what avail is all the labour of ploughing and sowing, of manuring and watering, if the growing corn is not guarded and made safe until it is reaped and garnered? You will also be asked to appoint a Deputation to wait on His Excellency the Governor and enlist his sympathy and support.

The delay that we have been deploring on the part of the local Government and of Downing Street is not without its compensations. The Indian Reform Bill has passed through the furnace of examination and criticism by an influential Committee of both Houses of Parliament. It is now in its final stage and is expected to be law before Christmas.\* From the official telegraphic summary available to us, the Bill appears to have been improved in Committee, but not sufficiently to satisfy Indian public opinion. Indian administration is beset with difficult and complicated problems, which have been successfully used by reactionaries to frighten the Committee.

None of these difficulties exists in Ceylon. She has, moreover, enjoyed for centuries the inestimable advantage of autonomous and ordered rule. It has always been our contention that we are fit for and ought to have a far more liberal constitution than India, and that no part of His Majesty's Eastern dominions is so well fitted for the realization of the British ideals of liberty, self-development and self-determination. The Royal Commissioners of 1829-30 expressly declared that they wished to see Ceylon a

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\* According to cables since received from London, the Bill was unanimously passed by the House of Commons on the 5th December.

political model to the rest of Asia. Twenty years earlier, in 1809, the creation of a Legislative Assembly on the lines of the British House of Commons was recommended. by Sir Alexander Johnston after a careful investigation and was approved by the Secretary of State, and only failed to become law by the accident of a Cabinet change in England.

A strange destiny has hung over Ceylon, and she has ever since been wandering in the desert and the British authorities are still pondering over the granting of a constitution less liberal than was deemed suitable over a hundred years ago. Can it be a matter of surprise that the people of Ceylon, with a knowledge of these facts of early British history in Ceylon, a knowledge of the history of their own civilization and autonomous government for over twenty centuries, a knowledge of the pledges given for the preservation of the people's rights and privileges, laws and institutions, by the British Government at the great Convention at Kandy in 1815, when the people chose the British Sovereign as their Sovereign,-can it be a matter of surprise that the people are impatient of the long-drawn-out delay in reforming their antiquated form of administration?

The following statistics show the progress, material and moral, which Ceylon has made even under the present

cramping conditions. How much greater might have been her progress, if she had not been during all these years kept tied to the apron-strings of bureaucracy!

Year	Population	Revenue £ <sup>p</sup>	Expenditure £	Exports £	Imports £	Tonnage shipping entered and cleared	Schools	Scholars
1834	1,167,700	377,952	334,835	145,834	372,726	153,510	1,105	13,891
1917	4,475,922	4,465,458	4,289,044	20,462,996	12,343,058	6,153,778	4,213	395,810

\* £1 is taken as equivalent to Rs. 10 in 1834 and Rs. 15 in 1917.

Many of us are firmly convinced that Ceylon is ripe for responsible government, such as Australia, Canada, South Africa, Newfoundland enjoy, and would make a good use of the powers if they were granted to her, though no doubt blunders will occur as even under the present form of government. But we are at present asking for much less than responsible government; we are asking for a step, but substantial step, towards the realisation of responsible government by Ceylon as an integral part of the British Empire.

The first Resolution, which will be submitted to you by the Hon. Mr. P. Ramanathan, the elected representative of the Educated Ceylonese in the Legislative Council, states the minimum that will satisfy

us--a Legislative Council of about fifty members, of whom at least four-fifths to be elected according to territorial divisions on a wide male and restricted female franchise, and the remainder to consist of official members and of unofficial members representing important minorities; the Council to be presided over by an elected Speaker, and to continue to have full control over the Budget, and without any such strange division as is proposed for India of reserved and transferred subjects; an Executive Council consisting of the Governor assisted by official and unofficial members of whom at least one-half to be chosen from elected Ceylonese Members of the Legislative Council and to be responsible for the administration of Departments; and the Governor to be one trained in the parliamentary and public life of England.

We venture to hope that our moderation will be appreciated and will be met in a friendly and sympathetic spirit. The country has been for many years in a state of ferment. It needs no great gift of statesmanship to realize the imperative need of ending it by the prompt carrying out of a wise and sympathetic policy. The highest authorities in India have repeatedly declared that "time is a factor of vital importance in the Reform question," and are pushing

the Indian Reform Bill through Parliament to make it law before Christmas.

In Ceylon there has not been even a declaration of policy. As to the details of the Reforms, a mere increase of elected members in the Legislative Council will not be enough. It would only make the Council more of a debating society than ever and add to the opportunities of friction. Nor is it for the mere loaves and fishes of higher appointments we are hungering. Ceylonese officials would doubtless be more in touch with the people than Europeans, more sympathetic and more amenable to public opinion. But they would be a bureaucracy still and liable to all the failings of a bureaucracy not responsible to the people.

A Ceylonese bureaucracy has no special attractions for us; it would be scarcely less detrimental than a European bureaucracy to the development of the spirit of freedom and of responsible government in Ceylon. In order to check the paralysing influence exercised over the life of the people by the army of subordinate Ceylonese officials responsible only to European officers, the first Resolution also demands complete popular control in purely local administration by a wide extension throughout the Island of Municipalities, Urban and Rural District Councils and



Village Councils, with elected Chairmen and substantial majorities of elected members.

The second Resolution deals with the Local Government Bill now before the Legislative Council, and urges the necessity for amending it as well as the Municipal Councils Ordinance of 1910. The Central Local Government Board under the Bill is an official-ridden body without any responsibility to the people and is invested with powers, the exercise of which will strangle all local initiative and autonomy. We ask that this Board should have large elected majority; that its powers should be restricted to guidance and advice, to giving the local bodies the benefit of centralized experience and specialist knowledge and of independent inspection and audit, and thus to secure the indispensable minimum standard of efficiency; that the Rural District Councils should have the same elective constitution as the Urban; the Municipalities should be extended throughout the Island and be subjected to complete popular control by means of a four-fifths elected majority of members and an elected Chairman. The Village Councils, democratic institutions based on adult suffrage, which have come down to us from time immemorial, but are now woefully crippled under a highly centralized British administration,-we ask that they should be restored to

their ancient power and prestige and made efficient and thoroughly popular in fact as in theory.

The third Resolution deals with the very important question of the present System of taxation, which is highly inequitable and falls heavily on the masses of our people. We ask for a Commission to undertake a comprehensive revision of the taxation with a view to lighten their burden. This important question has always been shirked by the Government. Sir West Ridgeway, it is true, appointed a Commission, but it never sat. The inquiry we demand is an indispensable preliminary to any change of taxation. But successive Governors have without it embarked on radical changes, springing them on the public to meet so called emergencies, rushing them through the Legislative Council with the help of an obedient official majority against the wish of the people. Such hand-to-mouth legislation, especially in the realms of finance and taxation, is highly detrimental to the public interest.

The Resolutions on Education will have your hearty support. Resolution IV asks that a much larger proportion of the public revenue than is spent at present should be set apart to provide adequate funds for the vigorous prosecution of education, in view of

the deplorable amount of illiteracy in our population, the decline of indigenous industries and agriculture and the poverty of the masses. Scarcely 5 per cent of our revenue is now spent on education,-a most inadequate recognition of the State's responsibilities, which puts Ceylon to shame by the side of the Philippines where over 32 per cent is spent, and by the side even of purely Indian-governed states like Mysore and Baroda. There should be universal compulsory education up to the age of 14, and an efficient system of industrial, agricultural, commercial and technical education.

Resolution V deplotes the neglect of Higher Education in this Island, the failure to establish the Ceylon University long asked for, or even the long promised University College. It is disheartening to think of the little impression made on the Ceylon Government by the agitation which has been going on for nearly a quarter century for the establishment of a Ceylon University. The strong public feeling on the subject led to the establishment of the Ceylon University Association in January, 1906. In spite of all its efforts we are not much nearer our goal, though there is no dearth of professions and promises. In fact the indifference of the Government in the matter of Education is one of the chief arguments in favour of

constitutional reform. It is strongly and widely felt that there is little hope of substantial improvement until the people of Ceylon have full control over their affairs.

Education is vital to our welfare and progress, and we can no longer consent to leave it to the pleasure of officials who flit across the stage of the Education Department with scarcely a policy and are permitted under our strange system of administration to change at will solemn declarations of Governors and Secretaries of State Promises and professions, even when embodied in statutes, have not always been redeemed. You know that compulsory elementary education has been on our Statute Book for many years, but how little progress has been made! Even in the capital city of Colombo this provision of the law has remained a dead letter, and thousands upon thousands of children are allowed to roam wild in the streets and to swell the criminal population. It needed four years of sustained agitation on the part of the Ceylon Social Service League to rouse the authorities to a sense of their duty. They have at last established three little free schools for the whole city of Colombo.

The very important question of Food Supply is also on our Agenda. We propose to urge upon Government the necessity of taking immediate and effective steps to

increase the production of food crops in the Island and to reduce the dependence of the people on India for their food supply. You are aware of the cruel sufferings they have undergone for many months past owing to the restrictions placed by the Indian Government on the export of rice. The pathetic efforts of the people to meet the emergency by increased cultivation have unfortunately been frustrated by heavy rain and flood, which has brought once more to the front the urgent need of protection against these oft-recurring and desolating floods.

The Ceylon Government is now at last alive to the importance of the food question. But it is questionable if anything effective will be done until we, whom it most deeply concerns, are in a position to deal with it ourselves after we are invested with the power and responsibility we are asking for. Vast sums of money have been spent in the past by great Governors, from Sir Henry Ward to Sir West Ridgeway and Sir Henry Blake, on the restoration of our ancient irrigation works, but with little benefit to the people. An expert imported from India by Sir Henry McCallum made elaborate inquiries, and wrote an exhaustive report which was shelved and never published. The officials of our newly-created Agricultural Department are more interested in tea and rubber than rice, and are

little competent to deal with its cultivation; and the future of our food supply is dark and ominous.

This Congress will be memorable if for nothing else, as the first occasion on which the voice of Labour will be heard in assertion of its rights and with the full sympathy and support of all Ceylon. This is in the fitness of things. The war has taught many lessons: one of the most useful is the value of co-operation. The successful outcome of the conflict was largely the result of the most complete co-operation. Irrespective of race, colour or creed, men worked and fought and suffered and died, side by side. The kinship of Humanity has come to be understood as never before. To-day we stand at the threshold of the period of reconstruction. The solution of the grave problems which now confront the world depends for its success on a continuance of this spirit of co-operation and brotherhood. Among those problems none is more important than that of Industry, none more menacing to the world's welfare. All over the world a grave unrest has arisen among the workers and been aggravated by the immense increase in the cost of the necessaries of life. Strikes and conflicts have ensued on a large scale, from which Ceylon has not been quite free. It behoves us to take judicious and timely steps to prevent labour becoming as intractable as in Europe and America.

Whatever may have been the view in the past, it is not to be denied that civilized nations no longer cling to the conception of Industry as an institution, primarily of private interest, enabling certain individuals to accumulate wealth, too often irrespective of the well-being, health and happiness of those engaged in its production. The modern view-point is rather that Industry is a form of Social Service, and that for its permanent success there must be insured to Labour adequately remunerative employment under proper working and living conditions, to Capital a fair return on the money invested, and to the Community a useful service.

Labour is, like Capital, an industry. But the labourer's contribution, unlike that of the capitalist, is not detachable from the one who makes it, since it is in the nature of physical effort and is a part of the worker's strength and life. There is another party to industry with a vital interest in it, often ignored, and that is the Community. But for the Community's contribution in maintaining law and order, in providing agencies of transportation and communication, in furnishing systems of money and credit and in rendering other services, all involving continuous outlay, the operations of industry would be enormously hampered, if not rendered impossible. The

Community, moreover, is the consumer of the products of industry and ultimately provides the wages, salaries and profits distributed among the employers and employees.

For these reasons, and because the labourers for the bulk of the population of a country and are ill able, for want of organization and education especially in countries like Ceylon, to protect their interests, it is the duty, as it is the right, of the Community to do so and secure the labourer against exploitation and injustice. There are many good employers in Ceylon, but even they will be glad to be protected against their meaner selves, against the unconscious promptings and temptations of self-interest. All have to realize that labour is not a mere article of commerce a commodity to be bought and sold, that human life is of infinitely greater value than material wealth, that the health, happiness and well-being of the individual, however humble, is not to be sacrificed to the aggrandizement of the more fortunate or more powerful.

These principles have now been sealed with the approval of the Peace Conference and been embodied in the Peace Treaty. It has taken long to win this recognition. The life of the labourer through the centuries, in the West as in the East. has been indeed



a *Via dolorosa*. His sufferings have forced him to form powerful organisations which are now able to protect him in Western countries. But our own labourers are disorganized, weak and helpless, and it is our duty to protect them until they are able to protect themselves. For some years past this duty has been in some measure realized in Ceylon, and we have attempted to discharge it by means of various organizations such as the Ceylon Social Service League and the Ceylon Workers' Welfare League. I feel sure that you will all welcome the resolution that will be put before you on behalf of the Workers' Welfare League, which seeks to bring the conditions of labour in Ceylon into conformity with the requirements of the Peace Treaty. You are aware that an Immigrant Labourers Bill is now before the public, being the fruit of a Commission which inquired into the subject of immigrant labour.

The Bill is a laudable attempt to deal boldly with some of the difficult problems of labour and to promote its well-being. But it can hardly be said to have freed itself from the old conception of industry which I referred to, and treats labour mainly as a commodity to be imported by Government and handed over to the employer. It retains in full force the barbarous provisions which subject men and women to imprisonment at hard labour and to fines for breaches

of civil contract and other acts which are not offences under the ordinary law. The Bill contemplates the employment of child labour from the age of 10 and makes no provision for the regulation of that labour nor for the education of children. It has nothing to say as to the fixing of a remunerative minimum wage or of reasonable hours of labour, but leaves these and other important matters to the inexorable laws of supply and demand. These and other flaws must disappear before the proposed law can be accepted by us or approved by the conscience of the civilized world.

I have trespassed on your time longer than I intended. I pray that the blessing of Heaven may rest on your labours and crown them with success, with happiness and prosperity to every class and section of the people of our dear Motherland and with strength and stability of the Throne of our Sovereign. May that beautiful Chant of Universal Love, the *Karaniya Metta Sutta*, be realized:

Sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitatta

Sukhino va khemino hontu.

"Let all living: beings be joyous and safe,

May it be theirs to dwell in happiness."

## **IX. Address at Interview with Sir William Manning.**

*[Sir Ponnambalam delivered the following speech at an Interview which Sir William Manning, Governor of Ceylon, gave to the Ceylon National Congress Leaders on 31st January, 1920, preparatory to his departure for England to confer with the Secretary of State for the Colonies on Ceylon Constitutional Reform]:-*

Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam said:-

"We are obliged to Your Excellency for granting us this interview. We have sought it in view of your approaching departure to England for a personal conference with the Secretary of State on the Reform question. Your opinion will naturally have great weight with him, and we are anxious to enlist your sympathy and support for the proposals we have submitted, to clear up any point that you may think needs elucidation, and to gather some idea of the scheme that has commended itself to your judgment. Our proposals are outlined in the first resolution of the Ceylon National Congress, which is already before Your Excellency and the Secretary of State. It is printed at page 16 of this pamphlet and, as you are familiar with it, I need hardly read it.

"The Constitution of the Congress in its first article declares its aim to be 'to secure for the people of Ceylon responsible government and the status of a self-governing member of the British Empire. This end is to be achieved by constitutional methods, by a reform of the existing system of government and administration, by a vigorous development of self-governing institutions, and by organising and fostering the intellectual, moral and economic resources of the country.'" We are glad to feel that this aim as well as our present proposals are in full harmony with the gracious Proclamation of His Majesty the King made last month to the people of India. In the course of that Proclamation, His Majesty said:-"There is one gift which yet remains, and without which the progress of a country cannot be consummated,-the right of her people to direct her affairs and safeguard her interests .... I have watched with understanding and sympathy the growing desire of my Indian people for representative institutions.... The desire after responsibility has its source at the root of the British connection with India. Without it the work of the British in India would have been incomplete. It was therefore with a wise judgment that the beginnings of representative institutions were laid many years ago. Their scope has been extended stage by stage until

now there lies before us a definite road to responsible government'.

"Representative institutions were begun in India by the British Government by the establishment of Legislative Councils in the various Presidencies in the 'sixties of the last century. At that time Ceylon had already possessed for a generation a Legislative Council with greater powers and privileges. The Royal Commission of 1833, on whose recommendations it was established, looked forward to Ceylon being the model for the rest of the British possessions in the East; and a Commission of a still earlier generation had recommended, and the Secretary of State accepted, a Legislative Assembly modelled on the House of Commons. However, Ceylon has been permitted to lag behind India. A dozen years ago India was given a more liberal constitution than Ceylon and now, under the Reform Act passed by Parliament last month, she has made a still more striking advance.

"In the Reform proposals now submitted to you, the Ceylon National Congress has been studiously moderate. But we feel, and we are in hopes that Your Excellency and the Secretary of State will feel that Ceylon is fit for and deserves a more generous measure of Reform than India, and should be placed

in a position in which she will be really a model to India and will be able to realise. More fully the wishes of His Majesty. The spirit in which his Ministers are prepared to deal with progressive Crown Colonies is evidenced by the Constitution just granted to Malta. May Ceylon, with Your Excellency's help, be not less fortunate!

"You may be aware that of late there has been a growing desire for union with India. It has been accentuated by the grievous sufferings of the people for many months past owing to the Indian Government treating Ceylon as a foreign country and imposing cruel restrictions on our food supply. Whether union with India would be advantageous to Ceylon is a question requiring careful consideration in all its aspects, and it has not yet received such consideration. But, speaking individually, many of us are at present opposed to the union. We would like to see Ceylon maintain her separate individuality, a precious growth with a great and ancient civilization and great traditions, and we believe that Ceylon will, if invested with responsible government, make more rapid progress than if tied to our big neighbour who is confronted and distracted with difficult and complicated problems. The question of food supply

exceeds all other questions in gravity and urgency. It should be solved and we think, can be solved independently of India by fully utilising the productive capacities of the Island. We earnestly beseech Your Excellency to find quickly an effective solution and to relieve the great and wide-spread suffering of our people".

## **X. Address to Congress Committee**

[At a meeting of the Committee of the Ceylon National Congress held on 17th August, 1920, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam delivered the following speech.]:-

Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam said:-

"We have met here to consider the question of holding a special Congress to deal with the crisis that has been created by the unwise and unsympathetic attitude of the Colonial Office. It is, as Colonel Wedgwood remarked in the House of Commons last week, the most reactionary department in Whitehall. Its power for evil has been effectually crippled in regard to the self-governing Dominions. They will not stand any interference from it and are so little in love with even a nominal connection with that office that they have demanded to be completely removed from its

jurisdiction and are soon to have their wish. The Colonial Office has had a free hand in its dealings with the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, and its policy towards them has been characterised chiefly by ignorance of their needs and conditions and indifference to their real welfare, an excessive deference to the wishes and interests of British residents and a good deal of cant, about the 'White Man's burden.

"The present 'head' of the Colonial Office, though of the Imperialist School, was found by the Reform delegates to be a gentleman of Liberal principles and raised in us high hopes. But he is apparently too busy or too weak to see his views carried into effect by his underlings. He is advanced in years, his departmental and Parliamentary duties are heavy, and he has for some time past been saddled with the task of dealing with a rebellious Egypt and of finding a peaceful solution for problems of exceptional difficulty and delicacy. He is burdened with other duties as a member of the Imperial Conference dealing with Peace problems and often requiring his presence in Paris. No wonder he has not been able to give Ceylon affairs due attention. It was with the greatest difficulty and after much waiting and pressure that he gave an interview to the Reform Deputation, though (it must



be admitted) he was exceedingly courteous and patient in listening to our views.

"It has been our misfortune also that with a Colonial Office so ill-informed as to our needs and conditions and indifferent to our wishes, we have a Governor who belongs to the time before the Flood and is by temperament and training absolutely impervious to new ideas or to the spirit of the times. He might make a passable Governor of a savage region in Africa, but is quite out of place in Ceylon and is even a positive danger.

"To the unhappy position in which we are now placed, we have ourselves contributed materially by our divisions. With so many people and interests—Europeans, Burghers Mohammedans Indians, the Chamber of Commerce the Low Country Products Association, etc.,- clamouring for representation, communal representation and representation of special interests became almost inevitable. Our Reform propaganda, too, has scarcely touched the masses of the people though they are most vitally concerned. The Lanka Mahajana Sabha and the Workers' Federation, the only bodies claiming to represent them have great possibilities but are hardly yet on their feet. The movement has been mainly

confined to the English Educated Classes and the workers are lamentably few. Though these have worked with zeal, self-sacrifice beyond words, they have been much hampered by the apathy of many professed reformers and lack of funds. Some men of influence in our party have little trust in the masses of the people and regard them as only fit subjects for a parental despotism. The Congress itself has been obliged to whittle down its demands and to hedge them round with so many safeguards and checks as to imply that we had little confidence in ourselves; and we could hardly expect the Colonial Office to have more confidence in us.

"It is time we all recognised that our movement cannot succeed unless we have a bold programme, confidence in ourselves and strong backing among the masses of our countrymen and among the people and public men of England. To achieve this we must have a widespread propaganda throughout the Island, in town and country and every village, in the vernaculars. We must send out speakers and preachers of the Reform by the hundred and the reform leaflets by the ton. I wish some of you could go to Egypt and see how political work is carried out there. There are over 10,000 students from the Great Cairo University-the El-Hazar Mosque-at work without fee or reward throughout the

length and breadth of Egypt, and hundreds of delegates have been sent abroad to influence public opinion, and the cost is borne out by funds to which the richest and the poorest have contributed liberally according to their means. Or, go over the way to India and see how the Congress and Home Rule Leagues carry on their propaganda in every nook and corner of India and in England and America, and how they have been able to defeat the opposition of a powerful bureaucracy and of powerful European interests, and the apathy or treachery of many of their own countrymen.

"Unless we are willing to do likewise, we do not deserve to succeed and will not succeed, and the efforts of the last few years will have been wasted. It is because the local Government and the Colonial Office think that we are not in earnest and that Ceylon is full of place and title hunters who can be got to do what it likes and to fasten the fetters on our people more strongly than ever, that our moderate and reasonable demands have been contemptuously rejected and we are about to be placed in a worse position than ever before in our history. If we are prepared to take these kicks lying down, there is nothing more to be said. But if, as I trust, you have sufficient self-respect to resent this treatment and assert your rights, you must work with

undaunted energy, cheerfully sacrificing time, money, energy, and health and giving the first place-in your lives and thoughts -to the political regeneration and freedom of Ceylon.

"Our greatest need is money to carry on the work here and in England. We can no longer depend on the generosity of a handful of men to finance the movement, nor can we go round, cap in hand, painfully collecting a few rupees. We must make up our minds to raise a fund of at least a lac of rupees. Our Delegates who recently went to England on this Reform Deputation have many of them made great pecuniary and other sacrifices. It remains for those who remained behind to make similar sacrifices. Some of them can afford to give five to ten thousand rupees each without feeling it. Let them not hesitate to do so. Let all, rich and poor, give liberally and cheerfully according to their means. Our Delegates will soon be back in Ceylon, and it is most important that their work be continued in England. If we are not able to have separate organisations there, let us join force with the Indian National Congress and utilize its London organisation for our purpose, bearing part of the cost. In furtherance of this object I suggest that, before you proceed to the amendment of the question of the Special Congress, you pass a resolution regarding the

necessity of raising such a Fund and appointing a Committee for the purpose.

"A number of influential members of the Labour Party-a Party which has been of great help to our country,- will soon be in India on a visit to the Special Congress to be held early next month in Calcutta. I suggest that we write them to come here on their way to or from India and meet us and acquaint themselves with our wants.

"In the event of your deciding to hold a Special Congress, it will be necessary to consider, inter alia, the resolutions to be placed before the Congress. This is an important matter. One resolution received urges demand for Home Rule for Ceylon. Others may demand the recall of the Governor, a policy of non-co-operation with Government, or amalgamation with India, etc., etc. Branch Associations should be invited to send in their resolutions and further committee meetings will be necessary before a final decision is reached. We must decide today on a resolution which I have drafted for you and which I deem urgent. Col. Amery declared that the proposed Legislative Council

was modelled by the Viceroy on the Upper Chamber. This is incorrect and misses the two essential features of that Chamber. It has an elected majority and the President is not the Viceroy. The Ceylon Council has no elected majority and the Governor is to be the President."

### **The Resolutions**

The National Congress deplores the persistence of the Colonial Office in its reactionary reform scheme which, under the guise of extending popular control, curtails the powers of the Council, restricts the freedom of debate and control over the Executive, and strengthens the autocratic powers of the Governor without providing any check on excesses, such as disgraced the British Rule in 1915.

2. This Congress demands a Council with a substantial elected majority and elected Speaker, rejects the proposed scheme which curtails the rights and privileges at present enjoyed by the present Council, advocates a policy of non-co-operation with the Government and demands the recall of Sir William Manning who, by his unsympathetic administration, has forfeited the confidence of the people of Ceylon

## **XI. Welcome to Congress Delegates**

*[The following was Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam's speech as Chairman of the Reception Committee at the Special Sessions of the Ceylon National Congress held on 16th and 18th October, 1920. In welcoming the Delegates, he said]*

Ladies and Gentlemen,-On behalf of the Reception Committee I offer you a cordial welcome. We are met here under grave circumstances and I am sure you will approach the consideration of them with a due sense of responsibility. A peaceful and loyal people have had, as it were, a bomb thrown among them and been driven into a state of excitement very natural but most lamentable. Let us do nothing to aggravate it, everything to moderate, regulate and calm it. Above all, let us carefully distinguish between the King and his servants. His Majesty has a world-wide Empire and it must needs be that occasionally there are unwise men among his servants doing unwise things. It is then the duty of the people to bring them to his notice and obtain redress.

I offer a hearty welcome to Mr. James Peiris who has been chosen to preside over this Congress and to guide its counsels. No better choice could have been made. It has been my privilege to know him intimately for

over a generation. Returning to Ceylon after a very distinguished career at Cambridge, there has been no public movement which has not benefited by his ripe culture, trained and sober judgment, high character and public spirit. His opinions are formed with deliberation; they are based on reason and principle and guided by zeal for the public welfare and loyal attachment to the Throne. Everybody feels that he has nothing up his sleeve; he is proof against official blandishments and knows not how to trim his sails to every wind. No wonder that he enjoys the unstinted confidence of the people of Ceylon without difference of race, or creed and even of the Government. It is, however, not very creditable to the Government that a man such as he, who would be an honour to any legislative assembly in the world and an acquisition to any Cabinet, has not been utilised all these years in the service of the Crown or even in the Legislative Council. As to these so-called reforms, which have excited such bitter disappointment and resentment, I find it difficult to understand the mentality of the men who devised the scheme. They profess to give a boon to the people of Ceylon and they poison the gift with suspicion and distrust, even insult and contumely. They have not scrupled to drag in the revered name of the King to further their plans. They have avoided the



usual channel of legislation and invoked His Majesty's prerogative, in defiance of precedent, to prescribe the very minutest details of this humiliating project, to impose it upon us without giving us an opportunity of being heard and to silence discussion. They have thus inflicted a shock on the people's faith and reverence towards the King, and in perpetrating this grave political blunder they have grossly failed in their duty to the King. But, as I have said and as we must impress on our people always and everywhere, His Majesty is in no way responsible for these camouflaged reforms. His wise and liberal sentiments are well known, also his deep interest in the welfare of our people. As a constitutional Sovereign he must act on the advice of his Ministers, and he merely signed a document put before him by the Secretary of State. Our case unfortunately never came even before the King's Ministers as a body, and the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, himself was far too busy and occupied with graver matters to give it adequate consideration. In spite of the liberal sentiments he expressed, and I believe honestly expressed, at the interview he granted to the Ceylon Reform Deputation, he apparently left the matter entirely in the hands of his Parliamentary Under-Secretary and the Governor. The observations of Col. Wedgwood in the House of Commons debate,

on Ceylon showed clearly that influential circles in England regard with considerable misgiving the attitude of Colonel Amery towards the non-European inhabitants of the Colonies. But he could have done little without Governor Manning. It is the pernicious policy of Crown Colony administration to be guided on all matters by the man on the spot—a policy which has been the fruitful source of calamity to us. Whether or not such a policy is suitable for the savage inhabitants of Africa or Fiji, it is quite out of place among a people like that of Ceylon, with an ancient civilisation and culture. It was an unsafe instrument in the hands of an official of the training and temperament of our Governor. As a private individual he inspires respect and even affection. But we are here concerned with him only as a public man. His political ideas are out of harmony with the spirit of the times. Arguments break in vain upon the rock of his prejudices. I have the pleasure of knowing and counting among my friends men of all shades of political opinion in England. It is surprising how little difference there is between a Tory and a Radical M.P., as regards the aims and ideals of British administration. Among our warmest supporters are Tory M.P. s. But Brig.-General Manning has no faith in these ideals and aims. He openly sneered at them at

the dinner given him by his European friends of the Ceylon Association in London to whom he was so profuse in his promise of help. Nor has he the saving grace of sympathy with our people. His Majesty the King, when he visited India as Prince of Wales, noted with his wonderful insight the lack of sympathy between rulers and ruled and publicly impressed on British officials the need for cultivating sympathy. These words have borne fruit in India, but apparently never reached the ears of Brig.-General Manning. He is chary of cultivating friendly relations with Ceylonese, and reactionaries and sycophants have made use of him for their own purposes. The punishment has come soon enough. Look at the public confession made in the Legislative Council the other day that he was grossly misled in regard to the wishes of the Kandyan people by those whom he had trusted. Here is a fourth of the population of Ceylon, degraded and humiliated by the loss of the franchise even in the Provinces in which they form the vast majority, and the vote is given to a few new-comers in their midst. While making this confession, he has not the courage and wisdom to remedy it at once by referring back the Order-in-Council to Downing Street, for amendment. He must needs insist on seeing it work for five years. Meanwhile these and other injustices and grievances,

which could have been avoided if he had followed precedent and the dictates of common sense by publishing the scheme for discussion, are to remain festering sores in the people's minds. What statesmanship! But I would entreat you not to despair. Governors and Under-Secretaries of State and Secretaries of State come and go. The people of Great Britain remain and their strong healthy sense of justice and liberty remains, and public opinion in the end tells. That is why British history has been singularly free from violent revolutions. Our political campaign here and in England must be prosecuted with a view to enlighten English public opinion and to continue the education of the masses of our own people. As a sign of the British temper I would call your attention to a leading article in a recent issue of the *London Times* on the Burma Reforms. Now Burma which is the most backward Province of India has been offered reforms far in advance of Ceylon, but the people are dissatisfied at getting less than the other Provinces of India and will not have them. *The Times*, which is by no means a radical paper but voices the enlightened public opinion of the upper and middle classes who rule England, supports the Burmese in their objection and protests against their being driven by the folly of officials from their present loyal and peaceful

tendencies. How much more can Ceylon count on the support not only of the ruling class which *The Times* represents, but also of the masses of the people represented by the Labour Party who have helped us whole-heartedly both in and out of Parliament.

They are even sending out two of their M.P.'s, Col. Wedgwood and Mr. B. C. Spoor, to study the position here and hearten us in our struggle. They will be here early in January. There is no need at all for despair. Let us pursue our work strenuously and constitutionally under the counsels of such men as our worthy President and we must win in the end. I myself never believed that, with the Governor we have at present, we should have any decent reforms, and I often said so publicly. The obstacles and disappointments we have suffered we must regard as a necessary discipline designed by Providence for our good. (Applause). In time to come we shall even look on Governor Manning as a benefactor for having made us a united and strong people. Only let us take these trials in the proper spirit. Let us not be content with passing resolutions but put forth all our energies and work. Not only earnest workers but large funds are necessary and I am sure, when I see the spirit which is animating our people, that these will be forthcoming. We believe that within the folds of the British

Commonwealth we can achieve the fullest development of our national life. The British Government is in no way committed to the silly scheme that is sought to be foisted on us and the best elements of the British people are on our side. If we are true to ourselves and work with earnestness and vigour, our success is certain. (Applause).

## **XII. The Present Political Situation II**

[Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam delivered the following "Address" at the Olympia Theatre, Colombo, on 15th March, 1921] :-

We are passing through a critical time and I gladly respond to the invitation that has come from many quarters to express my views on the present situation. In doing so I do not wish in the least to commit the Chairman or anybody else to them. Many persons share these views, but I put them forward on my own responsibility. Being no longer President of the Ceylon National Congress, I am able to speak more freely. I surrendered that office last October, having accomplished the task I had set to myself in 1916, of organising the reform movement, of educating the public, keeping all the forces, liberal and conservative and radical, together and securing agreement on the minimum demand for a reasonable reform of our

constitution. Having done that, I felt that I could work more effectively, as a private individual unshackled by official ties, for the people and the reform cause and carry it a further stage.

I have seen it sometimes stated that, because the Governor has made some concessions to the Congress to secure its co-operation, we have gained almost everything and are fairly certain of getting a substantial measure of reform. I am unable to share this optimism. I see in it a serious danger to our cause. Only last mail I had a letter from Colonel Wedgwood, whose visit to Ceylon has been such an inspiration to us. In the letter written on his way home he expresses the same opinion. He is, as you know, a trained and experienced politician. While in Ceylon he not only associated freely with all classes of people but also with the Governor and Other officials. He had special opportunities of knowing. Before he left Ceylon he told me to expect little from the Government. Now he writes that Government will want watching and he bids us remember that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. I wish I could impress this sufficiently on some of my optimistic friends who are to be found among the Congress leaders and who are deluding themselves and the public with false hopes. I am glad to see from today's telegrams in the *Daily News* that Colonel

Wedgwood has arrived safely home and has already begun active work in Parliament in our interests. In this letter he adds that he has written some articles for the English Press and is half way through a book on the whole problem. We shall all look forward with the greatest interest to their appearance.

We hear a great deal nowadays about the Ceylon National Congress as a power in the land, which it no doubt is. People are almost falling over each other's heels to join it and to bless it. But there was a time, not so long ago, when things were very different. The very name gave a shock, even to gentlemen some of whom are now Congress leaders. They objected to the word "Congress" as savouring of Indian disloyalty and sedition and would have nothing to do with the word. Then, "National" was an absurd and ludicrous epithet. So some of our reformers had to walk warily. The first meeting of delegates from various parts of the Island in December, 1917, was, in deference to these feelings, called a Conference on Constitutional Reforms. By December, 1918, the prejudice against "National" was dissipated; that term might pass, but Congress-no, not for the world. So that meeting had to be called the Ceylon National Conference. After the lapse of another year it was possible to call the meeting of



December 1919, the Ceylon National Congress; and now it is the rage.

I dread to think of the consequences, if some of us who were advocates of full self-government had proposed the name Home Rule or Swaraj League. It would have scattered to the four winds many of the big men in our camp. But the time is not far off when all of us will be working for Swaraj as vigorously as we are doing for the moderate programme of the Congress. Has not His Majesty the King used the word and blessed it in his message of last month to the Indian people? The word can no longer be banned by the most timid among us.

For this progressive change of attitude we have to thank the propaganda of the Ceylon Reform League which, as you know, was started early in 1917. At the time the chief political association in Ceylon was the Ceylon National Association, a body which after years of good work had fallen into a rather somnolent condition and was kept alive mainly by the indefatigable efforts of its Secretary, Mr. D.R. Wijewardene. The Association woke from time to time to discuss public matters, but constitutional reform did not come within the scope of its later activities. There was a wide-spread feeling of

depression and gloom, due to the Martial-law freaks of a panic-stricken Government in 1915, and to the helplessness of the people to obtain redress for these outrages in spite of memorials and deputations to England. That great and good Governor, Sir John Anderson, arrived here in 1916 and, after personal investigations, granted some relief. He was taken away from us by the cruel hand of death before his work was half done. My friend, Mr. Wijewardene, will remember what difficulty there was in bringing people together to hear what I wished to say on "Our Political Needs". There was no end of reasons why we should not talk politics. "The time was inopportune. We were in the middle of a great war. We must not embarrass the Government. We might raise forces beyond our control," etc. If those counsels had prevailed, where should we be now? Mr. Wijewardene arranged for that address being delivered before the Ceylon National Association, and in it I tried to voice the general feeling of dissatisfaction with the system of Crown Colony administration of this Island and urged the need for its reform on lines that I indicated. My suggestion was approved by the public and brought into existence the Ceylon Reform League on the 17th of May, 1917. I was elected President with Mr. W. A. de Silva as Secretary, Mr. F. R. Senanayake as Treasurer, and an

efficient and representative Committee. Propaganda and organisation work was immediately started. Meetings were held in various parts of the Island and old Associations were invigorated and new ones formed. In this work the Ceylon National Association co-operated zealously.

The subsequent history of the movement is fairly well-known and need be only briefly outlined. In June, 1917, a month after the League came into existence, it addressed the Secretary of State on the reform of the Constitution, and appointed Messrs. D. B. Jayatilaka and E. W. Perera as its representatives in Great Britain to promote reforms to interest Members of Parliament and the Press, and to arrange a deputation to the Secretary of State.

In August the Imperial Government announced a liberal policy for the reform of the Indian Constitution and sent out Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, to consult with the local Governments and peoples how to give effect to it. On the 17th of September the League and the Ceylon National Association jointly cabled to the Imperial Government for permission to submit the case of Ceylon to Mr. Montagu as the Cabinet's representative. This was not granted, but the Secretary of State, Mr. Long,

expressed his intention of discussing the whole question with Sir John Anderson who was shortly expected home from Ceylon. A joint Memorandum of the Reform League and the National Association was submitted on the 29th October to the Governor, containing a definite and detailed scheme of reform. On the 15th December a public conference, attended by delegates from all parts of the Island, adopted a memorial to the Secretary of State on these lines. Sir John Anderson was prevented by illness from proceeding to England, and, to our great misfortune and profound sorrow, died on the 21st March, 1918. An interregnum followed until the arrival of the new Governor, Sir William Manning, in September. Meanwhile the League and the National Association continued to put pressure on the Colonial Office through M.P.'s and protested against its procrastination and indifference, which were in striking-contrast to the actively liberal policy and measures of the India Office and the Indian Government. While setting out our reform proposals, we asked for an early declaration of policy and of the broad outlines of reform, as had been done for India, with instructions to the Governor to adjust the details. The Secretary of State, at last giving up the parrot cry "Time inopportune," replied that the proposals would

be reported on by the new Governor, Brigadier-General Manning.

The question now entered on a new and rather unfortunate stage. It was soon found that the Governor, though esteemed as a private individual was, by reason of training and temperament and old world prejudices, scarcely fitted to do justice to the problem before him. Nor had he the saving grace of sympathy, that precious quality the need for cultivating which was publicly impressed on all British officers by His Majesty the King when he visited India as Prince of Wales. The Indian Government considered "time as a factor of vital importance in the reform question." Though they had to deal with a population of over three hundred millions and with problems of infinite difficulty and complexity, they framed their scheme, courting the fullest publicity and criticism, admitted the benefit of such criticism, amended the scheme accordingly and carried it through Parliament. But the Ceylon scheme for a small population of four and a half millions, singularly free from difficult problems, was hatched in leisurely silence and secrecy. I protested against this mystery and procrastination in my address to the Conference in December, 1918. I said the Governor was floundering in the dark and his investigations would be long and abortive. A year later,

in September, 1919, I repeated the protest in a public address. I feared the Governor's scheme would turn out to be an addled egg, and that some paltry reforms would be imposed on us and we would be told that it was too late to discuss or alter them. I asked you to be on the alert and insisted that we must have a voice in the shaping of the reforms and that they must be in keeping with the repeated pledges of the Imperial Government in favour of Liberty, Self-determination, and Self-government. My worst fears have been realised. It is an addled egg that is sought to be imposed upon us, *nolentes volentes*, and it would have been imposed upon us but for our resolute opposition. Our meetings, memorials and deputations counted for nothing with the Governor, and he had, as we found afterwards, the vigorous support of a reactionary Under-Secretary of State, with whom the shaping of the scheme practically lay. Lord Milner had, in November, 1919, received a deputation from Ceylon headed by Mr. H.J. C. Pereira, and been favourably impressed by the force and eloquence with which our case was submitted. Lord Milner deferred a final decision until he had had opportunity of personally conferring with Governor Manning in the following Spring. December, 1919, saw the birth of the Ceylon National Congress over which it was my privilege to

preside. In the resolutions then passed our goal was declared to be the realisation of Responsible Government in Ceylon as an integral part of the British Empire. As a step towards such realisation the Congress stated its minimum demands to be (a) a Legislative Council of about 90 members, of whom at least four-fifths to be elected according to territorial divisions on a wide male and restricted female franchise, and the remainder to consist of official members and of unofficial members representing important minorities; (b) the Council to be presided over by an elected Speaker and to continue to have full control over the Budget and without any such division, as was proposed for India, of reserved and transferred subjects; (c) an Executive Council consisting- of the Governor assisted by official and unofficial members, of whom at least one-half to be chosen from elected Ceylonese Members of the Legislative Council and to be vested with the administration of Departments; and (d) the Governor to be one trained in the parliamentary and public life of England. This was a compromise effected between the various parties of the Congress as the irreducible minimum, and it was hoped that our moderation would be appreciated and would be met in a friendly and sympathetic spirit. In order to submit these demands personally to the

Secretary of State, a deputation was sent in the early part of last year to England, consisting of Messrs. James Peiris, E. J. Samarawickrema, and seven others, including myself. We received influential support from the leading M. P's. of all Parties, but it was with some difficulty that we were able to get an interview with the Secretary of State, who was pre-occupied with grave Imperial problems, especially in connection with Egypt and the Peace Conference. Parliament itself was harassed with anxieties about Ireland, Egypt, India and the Peace problems. Lord Milner gave the Delegates, whom I had the honour of heading, a very patient hearing and expressed to us very liberal sentiments. But apparently he was too busy to see them given effect to. Sir William Manning had preceded us to London and had the ear of Colonel Amery, who, as Colonel Wedgwood declared in the House of Commons, had a strong bias in favour of European settlers and against the permanent inhabitants. Our Governor has, as you know, unhappily not escaped the same imputation here. Anyhow between the two our demand, a reasonable one, for the opportunity of seeing and discussing their proposals, was refused and a cut-and-dry scheme was imposed upon us. They sought to silence discussion and criticism of this autocratic and reactionary scheme by avoiding the usual channel of



legislation and dragging in the revered name and authority of the King.

They made use of an Order-in-Council for a purpose for which it was never intended. It lays down the minutest details of procedure; deprives the Legislative Council of the salutary powers enjoyed by it for nearly a century, subjects the members to disabilities and humiliations unheard of outside the Duma of the late Tsar of all the Russias, places the members and proceedings of the Council absolutely at the mercy of the Governor. It introduces invidious distinctions between communities, creates special interests and denies even the beginnings of Responsible Government. It was an unpardonable blunder to have shocked the people's reverence and faith in the King. Luckily, we have taken effective steps to convince the people that His Majesty is in no way responsible for these camouflaged Reforms, and to make known his wise and liberal sentiments and deep interest in the welfare of our people. No wonder that this scheme fell as a bomb amongst a peaceful and loyal people and drove them into a state of profound excitement and indignation, and that a policy of non-participation in the reforms was unanimously demanded. The Congress, at its Extraordinary Session of 15th and 16th October last, rejected the scheme as an affront to the

people of Ceylon. It recorded a vote of want of confidence in the Governor, on the ground of his lack of sympathy and failure to do impartial justice to all sections of His Majesty's subjects and to represent faithfully their feelings and wishes to the Imperial authorities. Such a vote on the Governor is unprecedented in the history of Ceylon in the one and a quarter centuries of British Rule. The Governor ignored the popular feeling and proceeded to create an electorate. The Congress then, as you know, set about getting large numbers of voters registered with a view to declaring that they did not desire to be represented in the new Council. This was attended with such success that even non-Congressmen were compelled to abstain from coming forward as candidates. The newly-created constituency of the Low-Country Products' Association, which represents the bulk of the Ceylonese landed interest, refused to elect a member.

The Governor, having brought about this deadlock, at last realised the unwisdom of his policy and made overtures to the Congress. He offered (as I understood), if the Congress co-operated by sending members to the Council for about twelve months, to give them the opportunity of fully discussing and revising the New Constitution and to remove some of

the most objectionable features, such as the gagging of discussion, and to dissolve the Council at the end of the sessions and have the constitution amended. This, as I said, was the way in which I and many others understood the proposal, but there appears to have been some misunderstanding which requires clearing up and the matter is under the consideration of the Congress Committee. I shall refer to this matter later. The better and more regular course would no doubt have been to suspend the Order-in-Council, to invite representatives of all sections of the community, as was done in India, to a full and frank discussion and, after hearing all views, to frame a constitution. But the Governor apparently wished to save his face and to bring his constitution into force even for a short time. The Congress leaders were conciliatory and accepted the olive branch to which they had much difficulty in winning over the rank-and-file of Congressmen. The resolution confirming the acceptance was passed, after heated discussion, at an extraordinary Session of the Congress on the 18th of December last. By this resolution the Congress, in view of the assurances of the Government contained in the Memorandum of the Attorney-General of the 6th December, recommended participation in the elections under the Order-in-Council, unsatisfactory as it is, in order to

utilise the opportunity now assured to the Congress of shaping the new constitution and of working for the earlier realisation of the full Congress demands on Reform. By a second resolution, the Congress recommends constituencies to require from candidates a pledge to support zealously the policy of the Congress as set out in the first resolution of December, 1919 and to certain specific amendments of the Order-in-Council. It is on this footing that the Congress participates in the elections. The register of voters for the various constituencies has now been completed and was published as a supplement to the *Government Gazette* of last Friday, the 11th of March. The elections are to be held next month. A little modicum of common-sense on the part of the authorities might have saved all this long-drawn-out excitement and unrest and given us a fairly liberal measure of reform a year or eighteen months ago. It is generally felt that this would have happened if Sir Graeme Thomson or any other person in touch with the spirit of the times had been at the helm of affairs. Why could not the Governor have given us the opportunity we clamoured for of seeing his proposals in draft and suggesting amendments? Why should he wait to do so till he had created a deadlock and was compelled to give in? Where is the statesmanship or

dignity in this? While the various Indian Governments have been granted and are actually working Legislative and Executive Councils framed on liberal lines, Ceylon, which was sixty years ahead of India, is still in the throes of anxiety as to whether she will be granted even a small measure of the reforms granted to India. The history of the Reform Movement in Ceylon and of the Governor's share in it gives little hope of an early and satisfactory measure of reforms. Well may Colonel Wedgwood say, "The Government will want watching, be on the alert." I can see little of this vigilance among some of the older and influential leaders of the Congress. But I see an incurable optimism and a child-like faith in officials, which is bound to lead to disaster. Personally I expect little good to come from our participation in the new Council. There will be a great deal of talk and the Council will be more of a glorified debating society than ever. I advise you to keep yourselves ready to resume the policy of non-participation at the end of a year, and for that purpose to conserve your forces and funds and to carry on a wide and vigorous reform propaganda. I would especially appeal to the younger men to devote themselves to political work. Let them not pay excessive deference to the opinions and wishes of their elders, but think and study and form opinions

for themselves. The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity, said Lord Beaconsfield. Youth is the time of noble impulses and generous aspirations and should not be allowed to be thwarted or slackened by the cool, calculating caution of comfortable old age.

I referred a little while ago to the misunderstanding about the assurances of the Governor, an example of the unbusinesslike methods Congress Committee. I take my full share of the responsibility and blame. I am particularly grieved because my speech at the Congress meeting of December is believed to have largely contributed to determining the vote of a wavering and even hostile House. But at the time I honestly believed that the Governor's assurance meant completion of the amended reform scheme and dissolution of the Council in a year from its opening. I am very sorry to learn from my friend, Mr. Peiris, the President, that he is of opinion that the time was left indefinite. The difference is vital. It is much to be regretted that, when the question was raised at the Congress meeting by the veteran Mr. C. E. Corea, he was not given the opportunity of developing his point and making it clear to the House. Colonel Wedgwood was very emphatic that the term should be limited to one year, and that candidates should pledge themselves to resign their

seats at the end of the year or earlier if required by Congress. Otherwise the Government might continue the Council for two, three or four years and plead that the amended scheme was under discussion with the Secretary of State. I fear that this course might, in the absence of a pledge, fall in with the wishes of many members who would be loth to give up so soon the sweets of their position. It is in order to protect the country from the risks of the prolonged life of an ill-constituted and mischievous Council, to impress on members that they are sent there for the main purpose of shaping and improving the new constitution and to prevent them from clinging to their seats, that Colonel Wedgwood advised, and the Congress Committee recently decided that, whatever might be the correct interpretation of the Governor's assurance, the additional pledge should be required of candidates. A year is quite sufficient to finish the revision and the ordinary financial and other business of the Council. The resignation of the pledged members need not interfere with its continued existence if the Governor should wish to continue it, for the quorum is only six. I strongly advise the electorate to insist on every candidate taking this pledge and not to tolerate any backsliding. It has been objected that the Congress is exceeding its legitimate

rights in requiring pledges. But you must remember that these pledges only concern the measures considered indispensable to secure a good constitution, without which the Legislative Council will be useless and might even be dangerous. When once a good constitution has been won, no pledges would be required, so far as the Congress is concerned, as to ordinary legislation, which must be left to the constituencies. As to the present pledges, there is no wavering, no difference of opinion, on the part of the electorate. They quite see that it is supremely in their interests that the pledges are required. The faltering, the humming and hawing, the 'I dare not' waiting upon 'I would,' - is all on the part of interested individuals or reactionaries. It is the duty of the electorates to keep every candidate up to the mark, and I am sure they will see to it. Colonel Wedgwood's cable message from London in to-day's *Daily News* comes very opportunely. You will note that he insists on the Government revising the Constitution this year, on the revision being begun forthwith, as it is unlikely that elected members will continue to sit in Council after 1921 under existing conditions. This, the pledges will ensure. You will be glad to learn the high opinion he expresses of the political capacity and education of our people, of their fitness for democratic autonomy at an



early date. He looks forward to Ceylon being the first Asiatic self-governing Dominion in the British Empire. I beseech you to sweep aside the waverers and the croakers. Resolutely minded in a just cause, compel your leaders to work strenuously, unfalteringly,

"Strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find and  
not to yield."

Then the Goal of *Swaraj* which is no alms you are begging for but is your heritage, will be yours promptly. Only keep your leaders up to the mark.

Among the most vital points of the Congress demands are the substantial elected majority of the Legislative Council and the responsibility to that Council of unofficial members who may be appointed to the Executive Council. On the first point all Congressmen are agreed, but on the second I notice a tendency of some Congressmen and of even the President to waver. I do not see how they can do so consistently with the Congress resolution on the subject. Colonel Wedgwood was of opinion that the appointment of these Executive Council Members, before we are certain of an elected majority in the Legislative Council and of its control over them, would be very dangerous. The Congress Committee has

before it a motion by that stalwart reformer, Mr. E.T. de Silva, to ask the Secretary of State and the Governor not to fill these appointments until the principles of selection and control are settled. The very notice of the motion has roused the indignation of my friend, Mr. de Souza, almost as much as did the rumour of Justice de Sampayo's possible appointment to the Executive Council. Apparently the Editor of the *Morning Leader* has in his mind's eye some candidate whose appointment to the Executive Council he deems essential to the salvation of Ceylon, and anything that threatens such an appointment a terrible disaster. Others can no doubt think of other names as suitable. But not even if the staunchest of Congressmen were appointed, would I consider the appointment good for the country unless he was amenable to the control of a Legislative Council having an elected majority and could be removed by its vote. If the appointments are made before the constitutional powers of the Legislative Council are settled, they may be made use of to defeat the grant of a liberal constitution to the Council. The Governor may say to the Secretary of State: "Here are these gentlemen whom I have appointed owing to their great knowledge and experience of the people, etc., etc. They agree with me and with members of the Council who are not pledged

to the Congress (to wit, the European and Burgher members, nominated members, etc.), in condemning the grant of such a constitution as the Congress asks for. In the face of this volume of opinion, is it wise to give such a constitution as the Congress asks for?"

The result may easily be anticipated. I strongly advise you to insist on the Congress Committee passing Mr. de Silva's resolution. However admirably fitted candidates or members may be, I would ask you to act on Colonel Wedgwood's repeated advice: "Watch them as a cat does a mouse". Question each candidate as to his policy on every point and as to any act of his that you may think detrimental to his usefulness and independence. I strongly disapprove of the attempt made at some meetings to intimidate or suppress interrogators. This, I understand, happened even at Mr. James Peiris' election meeting at the Public Hall on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February. I am sure my friend was not responsible for, or even aware of, these tactics of over-zealous supporters. No man in Ceylon has less need of such tactics. But these have been vouched for in the public Press, and I regret that neither he nor any of the leading men who were on the platform with them has publicly expressed denial or disapproval of these disreputable proceedings. The right of a voter to interrogate and cross-examine the candidates is

indisputable, and must be freely exercised not only for the good of the candidate and the constituency, but as an invaluable means of political education of the electorate. The conduct of the men who howled down the questioners has been justified in one quarter by the allegation that the question contained false and libellous statements. That was all the more reason for answering it. The falsehood could have been easily exposed and the questioner put to shame. No candidate or supporter of a candidate must fancy that, because the seat is not contested, he can ride roughshod over the voters' rights. I sincerely trust that Mr. Peiris will not fail to make amends by giving all his electors full facilities for meeting and questioning him in as many Wards of the city as possible. One question at least was allowed to be put, according to the papers, though with considerable interruption. It was a very important question and concerned the demand for an inquiry into the administration of Martial Law in 1915. Mr. Goonesinghe deserves great credit for having put that question. It was one in which the vast masses of the people of Ceylon are deeply interested. I cannot understand any reasonable person objecting to it. There was certainly a wide-spread impression that the demand for an inquiry had been abandoned. I for one was under that impression and regretted it

very deeply, for I hold that no reforms that we can get are of any value, so long as the elementary rights of a citizen to the security of life, liberty and property which were then outraged, are not safeguarded and the violators of those rights brought to justice. I know that when the delegates were in England last year, they were advised by Members of Parliament and others to drop the demand for the inquiry as it might endanger the reforms. I was not myself on the Riots Delegation, but I could not agree with this view and told my friends so. The demand was in fact not pressed and, as you all know, it had no effect whatever on the Reform question. I do not, however, complain of the discretion exercised by the delegates. Some of them had personally suffered intolerable hardships and indignities and their lives were in danger at the hands of official miscreants, and it is not for me to judge whether these delegates did right or wrong. However, it will be a satisfaction to all Ceylon to know that the demand for an inquiry has not been dropped, and I trust that you will make your candidates take up this question in the new Council.

Another question connected with the Martial Law administration, I have recently had occasion, as President of the Ceylon Workers' Federation, to press

upon the attention of Government. That is the unfortunate case of 28 skilled workmen of the Government Railway who were cruelly victimised by the Martial Law. Many of the men appear to have petitioned the Government from time to time but got no redress. They recently took advantage of the presence of Col. Wedgwood, at a meeting of their Federation, to submit their grievances to him and ask for his intervention with the Secretary of State and the House of Commons. He advised them to submit the application first to the Governor through the Federation, and this has now been done. These unfortunate men were arrested without charge or inquiry and deported to Batticaloa in 1915, without any provision being made for their subsistence or maintenance there in a strange land. Their sufferings from want of work and food and from the climate were aggravated by their anxiety for their wives and children far away and in a state of destitution. When, after the lapse of six or seven months, they were brought back to Colombo, they continued to be treated as habitual criminals and had to report themselves to the Police, and all this time without any charge against them. The Railway authorities refused to reinstate them or to give them certificates except such as absolutely ruined their prospect of work. They

have been living a hand-to-mouth existence. Yet they were all skilled workmen with good characters and with service ranging from about ten to forty years. Their unmerited sufferings have reduced some of them to physical and mental wrecks. I trust that this representation of the Federation will succeed in procuring due compensation from Government for the terrible treatment of these men and their families.

There were no doubt many other questions of like importance to the administration of the Martial Law about which the electors would like to have questioned their candidate. I trust they will soon be given this opportunity. I am not sure also that it is a wise policy, which some of our Congress leaders have adopted, to eliminate possible candidates and in other cases to throw the whole weight of their influence in favour of one more than another pledged candidate. I have no doubt it was done with the best of motives and in their zeal for the success of the Congress cause. My own view is, the more numerous the candidates the better the public interests will be served, so long as the Congress pledges are accepted. The average voter does not yet seem to realise his importance, as the suffrage is new to him. Our leading men should avoid even the appearance of dictating to the Electorate

what candidate they should select, and should allow them to choose their own candidates. The right of election is a great privilege and education, and nobody should interfere in the voters' free choice. I admit this is more or less frequently done in England and elsewhere by caucuses and Party Associations. But let us not follow this evil example, which is sure to breed dissatisfaction and distrust.

There is a great deal more I should like to speak to you about, but I have already trespassed too long on your patience. I would, in conclusion, ask you to remember that the future of Ceylon is in the hands of you, the electors, scattered over the length and breadth of the Island, and that though older and perhaps wiser men are entitled to advise you, you should exercise your own judgment and see that no man or body of men, however wealthy or influential, dictates to you or interferes with your inalienable right and prerogative as voter to do what you decide to be right. I have always maintained and often stated publicly that I have absolute faith in the native and untutored instinct of the vast mass of my countrymen. Yours is a great and ancient civilisation, rich in the traditions and memories of a great past, in which for centuries you enjoyed autonomous



Government. You do not need the trappings or the teachings of the West to manage your own affairs. *Swaraj* is your undoubted right and will soon be your actual possession, and you will be, in the words of Col. Wedgwood, "the first Asiatic self-governing Dominion in the British Empire".

# Social Service

## XIII. Foundation of the Ceylon Social Service League

Immediately on his return from England in 1914, Sir Ponnambalam directed his whole-hearted attention to the amelioration of the wretched condition of the poor, and made it his mission to bring home to the wealthy and educated classes their obligation to serve those less favourably circumstanced than themselves, and to study social problems and to impart elementary education to the masses, which the Government had grievously neglected, thereby increasing crime; and to give medical assistance and generally improve the neglected condition of the poor whose life he characterised as truly a *via dolorosa*.

While in England in 1913, he took the opportunity to study the work of the London County Councils and the Local Government Board, as well as the Education Office, and studied their systems of Primary Education, housing the poor, and inspected the Infirmaries and Workhouses.

[Extract from Diary of May 12th, 1913.]

"Visited the Local Government Board and shown round by Mr. Burns. Thence to Hammersmith Infirmary and Workhouse. Splendid provision for the poor. Number of inmates 779. Afterwards the London County Council Education Office, and got much information of education of the masses. *"Great Need for Social Service Work in Ceylon. Must organise a movement of service for the people.-There is much to be done to house the poor in Colombo, primary education of the masses, and emancipation of the coolies from their present slavery."*

He summoned a few persons to "Ponklar", -the birthplace of so many movements for the uplift of Ceylon--on the 19th November, 1914, and expounded his views and imparted his burning passion for the poor, saying: "We must study the needs of the masses and bring to their doors knowledge and recreation, and brighten and beautify their lives and establish a bond of sweet human relationship between the educated and wealthy and their less favoured brethren. The work is almost appalling and includes education of the masses, medical relief, economic improvement, and the improvement of their housing and teaching

them to lead cleaner and better lives by coming into personal contact with them in their homes and giving medical relief as well as securing the benefits of compulsory insurance and minimum wages."

And it was resolved to form the Ceylon Social Service League, and the preliminary work being organized, the first General Meeting was held with Sir Ponnambalam in the chair on 29th January, 1915, and the rules drafted by him (which were so well drawn that they were adopted for the Servants of India Society by Mr. Gokhale,) and Sir P. Arunachalam was elected the First President of the League. *It was his aim to make* the headquarters of the League, where he worked unremittingly to improve the miserable condition of the poor, a "*Social Settlement*", after the manner of Toynbee Hall where men like Mr. Asquith worked during his early life at the Bar. In Ceylon, owing to the novelty of the movement, his appeal for personal service did not meet with a good response from a public steeped in money-making and ease; but, single-handed, he toiled on, working at the office eight and ten hours a day, and making it a centre of light and culture for the City. He started *Night Schools* to give instruction for the workers, and personally conducted a Social Study Class for the training of members in social work and instructed

workers on Lane Visitation; the slums in the city were visited by volunteer workers who collected information on the social condition of the poor and gave information and advice on sanitary matters and granted medical relief, as well as distributing milk free to mothers and children. *First Aid* classes were held and *Lantern Lectures* on Sanitation, Hygiene, the duties of citizens, were organised free for the poor, and athletic clubs for slum children with proper supervision started. *Industrial Education* to enable a child to earn a living was also taken up, and the *Cottage Industries* of the villages which were fast dying out were revived. For this purpose he suggested the creation of *Co-operative Credit Societies* to help the people to develop in industrial and agricultural enterprises by Government helping with loans for buying raw material, improved implements and machinery for industries, such as pottery, basket and furniture making, silver and brass work, lace, the cultivation of silk worms and manufacture of silk and cotton weaving, fisheries, etc.

A Bureau was opened to secure the craftsmen market for their goods. As a result of his activities workers in the plumbago industry, domestic servants, artisans, skilled workmen in engineering firms, etc. formed their own Co-operative Societies.

He also organised the movement and pressed on Government the necessity for the appointment of an *Industrial Commission* (with unofficials and experts) to survey the economic resources and industrial possibilities of Ceylon, to report on what measures are desirable to encourage by financial and technical assistance the present industries and to promote new industries. As a result of this the Government appointed a Commission, as desired, with himself as a member (See the report of the Industries' Commission).

## **Flood Relief**

In view of the serious distress caused by the floods in May, 1916, when thousands of people were rendered homeless, he organised Flood Relief Parties to render assistance and give pecuniary help in rebuilding houses, after inspection by members of the League. A Flood Relief Fund was started and over Rs. 11,000 was distributed among the flood-stricken villagers. In 49 villages alone over 7,900 people were relieved and monetary help was given to rebuild houses. In the debates of the Legislative Council the prompt action taken by the Ceylon Social Service

League in relieving the distressed was contrasted with the tardy measures of the Government officers.

The misconduct of Government officers in this connection was reported to the Government, and he pressed the necessity for reforming the system of village administration by associating non-officials to protect the interests of the peasantry.

### **Elementary Education In Colombo**

For several years, Sir Ponnambalam agitated for the introduction of elementary education of the poorer classes in the City of Colombo, and pressed on Government in several memoranda the necessity for Government to undertake this urgent duty of imparting some facility for educating the youth of the poor (of whom over 20,000 were entirely untaught and helped to swell the criminal population). At first Government tried to evade its responsibility, but as a result of his unceasing efforts, this matter, which was of vital importance to the Island, was brought to a successful issue. Sir Ponnambalam's unflagging interest in this matter of Elementary Education in the City of Colombo is evidenced in the following further correspondence he

carried on with Government and the Educational authorities:-

(1)

*(The Hon'ble the Colonial Secretary to the  
Chairman of the Ceylon Social Service League.)*

*No. 18176.*

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Colombo, 22nd October, 1915.

SIR,-With reference to your letter dated the 15th October 1915, addressed to the Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary with regard to the Elementary Education of the poorer classes in the City of Colombo, I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to inform you that at the present juncture it is impossible for Government to contemplate the expenditure involved.

Sir P. Arunachalam Kt.,  
36, Dean's Road,  
Maradana.

I am, etc.,  
(Sgd.) F. C. GIMSON,  
*for Colonial Secretary .*

(2)



*(From the Director of Education to the  
Chairman of the Ceylon Social Service League.)*

No. G. 6147/ 18237.

Education Office,  
Colombo, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1915.

SIR -I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 5th instant on the subject of Elementary Education in Colombo. As soon as Government is in a position to deal with the question, this Department will give any assistance in the matter that it can.

Sir P. Arunachalam, Kt.,

I am, etc.,

Ceylon Social Service League,

(Sgd.) J. HARWARD,

Maradana.

Director of Education.

(3)

*(From the Chairman, Ceylon Social Service  
League, to the Hon'ble the Colonial Secretary.)*

Ceylon Social Service League,  
Colombo, 12th May, 1916.

SIR,-I have the honour to forward herewith for your acceptance a copy of the Annual Report of the Ceylon Social Service League for the year ending 28th February, 1916, and a copy of the minutes of the last meeting of the General Committee.

2. I am desired by the League to invite the attention of Government once more to the utter absence of elementary education for the poorer classes in the City of Colombo. In reply to my letter of 1st September last, you wrote on the 22nd October that at that juncture it was impossible to contemplate the expenditure involved. The finances of the Island have since shown a marked recovery and received a further addition from the proceeds of the newly-imposed taxation.

3. The League submits that the poorer children of Colombo, who have been totally neglected for over half -a-century, have a first claim on the attention of Government. Their continued illiteracy constitutes a public danger as well as a scandal.

4. Mr. Frederick Harrison has well observed: "There is this broad and vital distinction between educational expenditure and almost every other form of public expenditure. In the bulk of public work it is, generally speaking possible to postpone expenditure with no worse result than delay. You go without the

desired thing for a year or two -whether it is a street improvement, or a new road, or a public park, or the building of baths-but when you get it ultimately you get it as you would have had it now but for the delay. You can pick up your project where you dropped it. But you cannot do that with education. The work of the schools has to do with but a few years of the life of our children; but they are the formative years. It is work which cannot be postponed and picked up again later on.

The child passes on into its life of adult responsibility, and the ignorance, the undeveloped outlook, the narrowed powers due to any educational neglect during these few formative years, will be a lasting handicap, affecting adversely the whole quality of the national life into which such a neglected and starved school generation grows up." May it not be said that this observation was in some measure illustrated by the conduct of the rabble during the Riots of last year?

The Hon. the Colonial

I am, etc.,

Secretary, Colombo.

(Sgd.) P. ARUNACHALAM.

( 4 )

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Colombo,  
31st May, 1916.

No. 8428.

SIR,-I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th May, 1916, regarding the elementary education of the poorer classes in the City of Colombo.

The Chairman,

I am, etc.,

Ceylon Social Service

(Sgd.) F. C. GIMSON,

League, Colombo.

*for Colonial Secretary.*

(5)

*(From the Chairman, Ceylon Social Service League, to the Hon'ble Members of the Legislative Council.)*

Ceylon Social Service League,  
Colombo, 8th June, 1916.

DEAR SIRs,-I send herewith a copy of the Annual Report of the Ceylon Social Service League and would invite your attention to pages 14-17 on the subject of the utter lack of elementary education for

the poorer classes in the City of Colombo, and to the officially admitted fact that about 11,000 children are quite unprovided for, many of them running wild in the streets.

The League has recently, on the 12th ultimo, renewed its representations to Government and pointed out the grave scandal of this state of things, and that the plea of want of funds no longer holds good in view of the increased taxes and the flourishing state of the Exchequer, and that the children of Colombo, who have been neglected for half-century, while funds were abundant, have a first claim on the attention of Government.

The League will be grateful to you if you will, by motion or question in the Legislative Council or otherwise use your influence with Government to secure a start being made on the lines recommended by Mr. Harward, Director of Education (pages 15 & xxii of the annexed Report.) Yours faithfully,  
(Sgd.) P. ARUNACHALAM.

To the Hon 'ble Members  
of the Legislative Council.

(6)

*(From the Chairman of the Ceylon Social Service League to the Director of Education.)*

No. 206.

Ceylon

Social Service  
League,

Colombo, 15th January, 1917.

Sir,

I have the honour to request that you will be so good as to inform me what steps have been taken in regard to the providing of elementary education for the poorer classes in the City of Colombo and when the first school may be expected to be opened.

2. I forward herewith the last Annual Report of the League and request reference to paras 28 to 32 and Appendix V., pages 19 to 37, for the action taken by the League to press the question on the attention of Government.

3. The League is confident that under your vigorous and sympathetic *regime* this serious problem, which has been shelved for over half-a-century, will be soon effectively dealt with and a grave public scandal and danger removed.

The Director of Education,

I am, etc.,

Colombo.

(Sgd.) P. ARUNACHALAM, Chairman

(7)

*From the Director of Education to the  
Chairman,*

*Ceylon Social Service League.*

No. G. 329/ 823.

Education Office,

Colombo, 22nd January, 1917.

*"Provision for Elementary Education for the  
Poorer Classes in the City of Colombo."*

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge your letter No. 206 of the 15th instant, with regard to the provision of Elementary Education in the Town of Colombo.

2. This important question has engaged my attention from the time I assumed duties as Director of Education, and I entirely agree with your League as to the urgent necessity of steps being taken to provide for the education of the poorer classes in Colombo.

3. The first step was to amend the Ordinance No. 5 of 1906 so as to transfer the responsibility for the Education of the Town from the Municipality to this Department until this was done Colombo could

not be brought under the Town Schools Ordinance. The amending Ordinance has just been passed and Colombo will now be proclaimed under the Town Schools Ordinance,--compulsory education being proclaimed gradually, ward by ward, according as the provision for supplying education is found to be sufficient.

4. A sum of Rs. 50,000 has been provided by Government in the Estimates for 1916-17 towards the provision of schools. My first intention was to build Government schools and to run them as such, and with this object an estimate was obtained from the Public Works Department for the erection of a school to accommodate 250 children at Green Street on a site which has been handed over by the Municipality-(vide para 5 of Appendix V. of your Annual Report for 1915.)

The cost of erection was estimated at Rs. 14,500. In the meantime the Wolfendahl Consistory has approached me with an offer to erect a school on this site on the lines approved by this Department, provided that the Department would contribute towards the cost of the building-the school to be conducted as a Grant-in-Aid school. The General Manager of Buddhist Schools has also offered to conduct a Grant-in-Aid school in buildings to be



approved by the Department to accommodate 2 to 300 boys, provided a site can be provided and financial assistance contributed towards the cost of the building. I hope to secure a site at Maligakanda.

I am in correspondence with the Roman Catholic Mission with regard to the starting of a large industrial school in connection with a Government Vernacular or Anglo-Vernacular School for which a suitable and central site can, I think, be obtained.

It will be as well, I think, to begin with three wards and then gradually provide for other wards where existing schools may be found insufficient-in one or two wards the provision appears to be sufficient already if some of the schools are enlarged. I believe that it will be found that the best way of providing elementary education for the poorer classes in the City of Colombo will be through Grant-in- Aid Schools conducted by religious bodies-it being of course clearly understood that the schools will be entirely undenominational. I hope that an early start may be made with at least two of these schools.

5. It occurs to me that your League might be prepared to open a school in Colombo on similar lines to those which have been put forward in the case of the Missions above referred to-the school to be built by the League on plans approved by the Department,

the site and a portion of the cost of erection being provided by this Department, and the school on completion to be managed by the League as a Grant-in-Aid School.

I shall be glad to discuss this proposal with you or other representatives of the League and to give you any further particulars you may desire.

6. These proposals are of course subject to the approval of Government.

I am, etc.,

Sir P. Arunachalam,  
(Sgd.) E. B. DENHAM,  
Chairman,  
*Director of Education.*  
Social Service League.

(8)

(From *the Ceylon Social Service League to the Director of Education*).

No. 227.

Ceylon Social Service League,  
Colombo, 29th January, 1917.

Sir,

I thank you for your letter No. G.329-823 of the 22nd instant and have the honour to inform you

that the League will be glad to appoint a deputation to discuss the matter with you, if you will kindly fix a day.

2. Meanwhile the League would like to know what is understood by the term "strictly undenominational." A religious body is scarcely likely to agree to give only secular teaching in its schools, though an undenominational body like this League would do so. Perhaps what is meant is that a Conscience Clause will be enforced.

3. As at present advised, the League considers that Grant-in-Aid Schools cannot deal effectively with this important question and that elementary education should be provided mainly, if not wholly, in Government schools.

I am, etc.,

The Director of

(Sgd.) C. H. Z. FERNANDO,

Education, Colombo.

*Hon. Secretary.*

(9)

*(From the Director of Education to the Ceylon Social Service League.)*

No. G.S. 740, 1979.

Education Office,

Colombo, 13th February, 1917.

Sir

With reference to your letter No. 227 of 29-1-17, I have the honour to refer you to Section 21 of the Rural Schools Ordinance, and to state that I shall be glad to meet a deputation, on Tuesday, the 20th, between 3 and 4 p.m.

The Hony. Secretary,  
Ceylon Social Service  
League, Maradana.

I am, Sir, etc.,  
(Sgd.) E. B. DENHAM,  
*Director of Education.*

(10)

*(Deputation from the Ceylon Social Service  
League  
to the Director of Education.)*

A Deputation consisting of Sir P. Arunachalam, Rev. O.J.C. Beven and Messrs. James Peiris, F. Kunz and C. H. Z. Fernando met the Director of Education on Tuesday, the 20th February, 1917, at 5-15 p.m. to discuss the question of Free Elementary Education in the City of Colombo.

The Director stated that he was willing to find the League a site and also to bear half the cost of the building for a free day school to be conducted by the League; the building to be put up according to plans made by the Public Works Department and approved of by him. He stated that he had made a similar offer to the Wolfendahl Consistory and to the Buddhist Theosophical Society, and that both these bodies were ready and willing to establish schools on these conditions. Sir P. Arunachalam stated that Government should be wholly responsible for education in the City and that this duty, so long neglected, should not be thrown on religious or secular bodies. The Director said that Government might also have a similar school to serve as a model. He pointed out that a Government school would cost more than a private one and he had to take that point of view into consideration as the grant for this specific purpose was one of Rs. 50,000; but he hoped to get the grant increased soon. Mr. James Peiris was of opinion that it was beyond the League to take up the management of such a school, as the activities of the League were already manifold. Sir P. Arunachalam asked the Director whether religious education would be optional. The Director stated that religious education would be entirely optional and might be after school

hours. In reply to a question from Sir P. Arunachalam, the Director said he did not propose at present to provide for the education of girls. But after further discussion, it was agreed that the boys might be taught in the forenoon and the girls in the afternoon in the same building. After some further discussion the Director thanked the Deputation for the help they had given him on the subject and the Deputation withdrew.

## Post Office Savings Banks

( 1 )

*(From the Chairman, Ceylon Social Service League,  
to the Hon'ble the Colonial Secretary.)*

Colombo, 28th October, 1916.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that members of the Ceylon Social Service League, working among the poorer classes in the City of Colombo, have found them ignorant of the existence of the Post Office Savings Banks and where not ignorant, not using them for want of such facilities as exist in Great Britain.

2. There, *inter alia*, forms are used on which penny stamps may be affixed until they are of the value of one shilling, when the form may be presented to the

Post Office and is accepted in lieu of a shilling. Here only money is accepted in deposit. Though the minimum amount is twenty-five cents, it is more than a poor person can save at once; and where an attempt is made to save it in small instalments the amount is liable to be spent before the minimum is reached. If a form were adopted in Ceylon to which five-cent stamps could be affixed, it is likely to be used and would help to promote thrift.

3. In England the existence of this form has been utilized by philanthropic persons working among the poor for the collection of deposits. Annexed is an extract from Miss E. Jebb's *Cambridge: A Social Study*, showing how the work is done in the town of Cambridge and with what good results. The Ceylon Social Service League could undertake to do likewise through its Lane Visitors. Children at school could similarly be reached through their teachers and taught to acquire the habit of thrift in early life.

4. It is also desirable that greater facility should be allowed to depositors in Ceylon to withdraw their deposits. Under the present rules no withdrawal can be made in any part of the Island unless the application is referred to and sanctioned by the Head Office in Colombo,-which involves an inconvenient delay of some days. The League recommends that local

Postmasters be authorized to refund deposits up to (say) ten or twenty rupees without the necessity of reference to the Postmaster-General.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
P. ARUNACHALAM,  
*Chairman.*

The Hon'ble the Colonial Secretary,  
Colombo.

*Extract from "Cambridge: A Social Study."*

"Each collector has her own district, which she visits on a fixed day at the beginning of each week, going from house to house to take the small savings of the poor. The money is deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank by means of the forms issued for holding 12 stamps, by which method all elaborate keeping of accounts of innumerable petty sums is avoided, the stamp form serving as the depositor's receipt for his money, and as evidence to collector and depositor of the money in hand. When the first shilling is completed, the collector procures the bank book in the depositor's name and takes each subsequent shilling to the Post Office. On opening a new district she is provided with leaflets setting forth the advantages of the collecting bank, and leaving these from door



to door she finds an easy way of getting into touch with the people and drawing their attention to the subject of thrift.

"As has been already remarked, it is not so much the poverty as the ignorance of the poor that prevents them from saving. When there is a penny or two left over at the end of the week after the weekly expenses have been met, they do not pause to think of a day when even pennies may be wanting, or if they do think of it they know of no means of preserving the small surplus of to-day against a future need. The collector not only suggests such a means but brings it to their very doors.

"If anyone asks why the collector's visits are necessary when the Post Office is never very far away and the depositor might take his own money to the bank, let him think what it means to the busy mother of a family to make a journey after perhaps a single stamp for the form that is to hold twelve before it can be paid in. Or if she does not use the stamp form but keeps the actual pence, how easily they are lost or spent or find any other destination than the bank for which they were intended. Few mothers even of the very poorest class ever resist a child's entreaty for a penny to buy sweets. But even if the shilling is at length accumulated the transaction at the Post Office, when

the bank book is asked for and there is a form to be read over and filled in, is itself a formidable business to be gone through in the public eye by one to whom neither reading nor writing comes very easily; indeed, collectors not seldom meet with people who already know all about the Post Office Savings Bank, and are alone deterred from using it by dread of this preliminary ordeal, and who when this is once surmounted for them, have gladly gone on saving by themselves, requiring no further assistance.

"But are not people who can save but a penny or two a week-and that only if the penny is actually fetched out of their hands-too poor to save at all? Is it worth the collector's while to make these weekly journeys, many of the visits fruitless, for such very small results? The best answer is found in some of these actual results. A collector in Castle End received in a year from 27 depositors the sum of £16 10s. From a lane in Newnham, where 26 depositors eagerly welcome the bank lady's visits, £8 9s. 6d. was collected. A collector who goes to two small streets in Barnwell has 13 depositors, who saved in the same year over £5. Another, after only three months' work, reports 20 depositors and £3 15s. in the bank. Such are the results the collector has to show. And the depositors themselves testify warmly to the benefit the bank has

been to them. One woman put by three pounds in weekly sixpences, of which, as she herself confessed, not one would have been forthcoming but for the weekly collector. During a hard winter when her husband, a painter, was long out of work, this money was taken out week by week as wanted to pay the rent and keep the family in food. When the husband returned to work there was even yet a little in the bank, and they were not a shilling in debt; "but I can't think what we should have done that time but for the bank," she still tells her "bank lady." Many families save for special objects, of which a very favourite one is the children's annual outing to the seaside—a day at Yarmouth or Hunstanton, or for boys sometimes' a week in camp, for which they put by their pennies week by week throughout the year. One woman, whose daughter had a talent for music, bought a piano for thirty shillings, and proudly asked the collector to try it! Another, having suffered for years from chronic indigestion, put by enough to provide a set of artificial teeth which the doctor had long recommended, and shewed as much gratitude to the collector as though it had been her own gift."

(2)

*(From the Hon'ble the Colonial Secretary to  
the  
Chairman, Ceylon Social Service League.)*

No. 18667.

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Colombo, 14th December, 1917.

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 28th October, 1916, suggesting the introduction of a system similar to that in vogue in Great Britain whereby small savings are brought to the Post Office Savings Banks by the collection of postage stamps and printed slips, I am directed to inform you that His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to approve of Stamped Slips (10 or 5 cents) being accepted as Post Office Savings Bank deposits.

2. His Excellency has also been pleased to approve the adoption of the practice of allowing withdrawals of small sums on demand at Post Offices, the amount to be so withdrawn on any occasion being limited to Rs. 10/ .

3. The Postmaster-General has been instructed to frame the necessary rules to give effect to the scheme.

I am, &c.  
(Signed) A. N. HUTT,  
*for Colonial Secretary.*

#### XIV. Labour and the Cooly

*[Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam's interest in the Labourer and Cooly of Ceylon, and his zeal to lift them up from the slave conditions under which they worked in the Island, were evidenced long before he founded the Ceylon Social Service League.*

*As long ago as July, 1913, he availed himself of a holiday in England to interview the Rt. Hon. L. Harcourt, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, to whom he addressed the following letter]*

Reform Club,  
Pall Mall, S.W.  
16th July, 1913.

Dear Sir,

You were pleased, at my interview with you on Monday, to express a warm interest in the condition of coolies on Ceylon estates and in the legislation affecting- them. The principal statute is the Ordinance No. 11 of 1865, which regulates contracts

for hire and service and applies equally to domestic servants and estate coolies.

Under this law such a contract is (in the absence of a special stipulation) deemed a monthly contract. A breach of it is a criminal offence: quitting service without a month's notice or reasonable cause, disobedience, insolence, etc. are punishable with three months' imprisonment (simple or rigorous) or fine of fifty rupees or both. (Section 11).

Under Section 24 the Court is required, at the option of the prosecuting employer, to order the convicted person at the expiration of his sentence of imprisonment to return to his employer and complete the term of service.

Cases have occurred where even women were repeatedly sent to gaol for refusing to go back to their employer on the estate, and where, the labourer's remonstrance as to insufficient pay or erroneous pay has been punished, as insolence, with imprisonment.

Such a stringent law and stringent administration of the law would be rendered unnecessary by the payment of adequate wages and considerate treatment of the Tamil cooly, who is acknowledgedly the most easily handled labourer in the world. It is due to the employers to state that a few are content to rely upon fair wages and treatment and

refuse to avail themselves of the privileges accorded to them by the law.

The minimum reform needed, I would submit for your favourable consideration, is to exempt women and minors from imprisonment for breaches of this law, and to secure estate coolies a living wage by the establishment of Wages Boards in the various planting districts.

As against adult males the P.M.'s (who, being usually young and inexperienced, scarcely realize the exceptionable and inequitable nature of the law) might be advised to administer it with leniency.

I am,  
Yours faithfully,  
P. ARUNACHALAM.

The Rt. Hon. L. Harcourt, M. P.  
His Majesty's Secretary of  
State for the Colonies.

## **Labour in Ceylon**

[And the following represented an address which Sir Ponnambalam delivered at the Colonial Office in London]:- Sir Ponnambalam said,

There are two kinds of labour in Ceylon indigenous and immigrant. The indigenous

labourer is very often a peasant-farmer, and cannot be relied on for regular employment in the tea, rubber, coconut and cocoa plantations, which are the chief industries of the Island. For three-quarters of a century, therefore, labour has been imported from South India through recruiters, and this labour is indispensable to the Island's prosperity. There is no indentured labour on these plantations. The labourer is, in the eye of the law, free, and his contract is terminable at a month's notice. But there are provisions of the law and defects in its administration which, especially in the case of the immigrant labourer, make the freedom sometimes a mockery. It is an offence punishable with imprisonment and fine, to quit service without notice, to neglect work, to be insolent to the employer, etc.

Though there are many just and humane employers, there are many more who are not and who take undue advantage of the law, resulting in large numbers of labourers-men, women, and even children-being sent to gaol for purely labour offences.

Till recently it was no uncommon thing to see in the papers advertisements offering rewards for the arrest of runaway labourers, including women and children. These public advertisements have now



ceased owing to the efforts of some of us, but the arrests and imprisonments continue, and under a Bill now under consideration a labourer may be arrested by any Peace Officer without a Magistrate's warrant, which is necessary under the existing law.

Not long ago when I was in the Public Service, and a visitor of the gaols, a humane English Governor of the principal gaol in the Island showed me a number of women undergoing hard labour for labour offences, and compelled to associate with women of the worst character convicted of serious crimes, and he implored me to take steps to render such imprisonment impossible. Since then as a result of our agitation the law has been amended within the last year or two so as to exempt children from imprisonment, and also women, but only on a first conviction. The law is, I believe, going to be still further amended by the exemption of immigrant labourers altogether from the operation of the penal clauses.

If this excellent intention is given statutory effect to, it will be a great boon, but we would ask your Committee to be on the alert to see that this happy result is really achieved and that the good intention is not defeated or whittled down-and further to see that

the benefit of this exemption is extended to the indigenous labourer. There is no reason whatever for any differentiation. The Government will probably say that at present they are concerned only with the immigrant labourer. But the penal clauses are part of the general labour law and we beg you to insist on their total and immediate abolition.

Statutory provision is also needed for the fixing of minimum wages, for the regulation of the hours of labour, and for the abolition of child labour. These matters are left to the inexorable law of supply and demand. What this means you may imagine as between the poor, ignorant immigrant labourer, and the rich and powerful employer. As a matter of fact, the wages of the plantations rarely reach a shilling a day for a male adult and are much less for women and children. Nor are there any regulations as to the hours of labour that may be exacted even from children. We suggest that wages and hours should be fixed by Boards appointed for each district. The Board should include representatives of employers and employed and be presided over by the chief Government official of the district or his deputy. The appointment of the Boards should be specially provided for by statute and not be left to the discretion of Government or to by-laws.

As to child labour, the legislation now proposed by Government fixes the minimum age at 10 in the teeth of the recommendation of their own Committee which fixed it at 12. These and other provisions show that the Government has not been able to resist the powerful influence of employers, and that it needs all the support you can give it for the protection of the labourer.

The Bill in its final form has not been published, but through the courtesy of the Colonial Office I was lent a copy of it in a provisional stage and made a hurried study of it. It has some excellent points such as I have mentioned and is designed to protect the immigrant labourer and put on a better footing his relations with his master. But the Bill rather looks on the labourer as a bale of goods to be "handed" over (that is the actual wording of the Bill) by the Government to the employer who may even let him on hire to another employer. I will not take up your time further, though here is much more to be said. If your Committee is able to obtain from the Colonial Office copies of the Bill and appoint a few of your members to study it with one or two of us, we may be able to make more useful and more detailed suggestions for the amendment of the labour laws of Ceylon.

I should like before I sit down to read to you the Ceylon Resolution on Labour.

## **XV. Address on Indian Emigration**

*[A meeting of the Indian Colonial Society, Madras, was held at the Polytechnic Hall, Colombo, on 5th April, 1916, when Mr. T. K. Swaminathan, Editor of the Indian Emigrant and Founder and Organising Secretary of the Society, delivered a Lecture on "Indian Emigration and the Need for Organisation."]*

*Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, who presided at the lecture, delivered the following speech in opening proceedings]*

Sir Ponnambalam said:

It is my pleasant duty to introduce to you the lecturer, Mr. Swaminathan of Madras, the enterprising and public-spirited Editor of a monthly journal entitled the *Indian Emigrant*. I know him only from his writings in that periodical. It is doing excellent work. Its aim is to record the status and doings of Indians in British Colonies and foreign countries, to safeguard the interests of emigrants, and to advocate equal rights of British citizenship within the Empire.

Emigration and colonization have been a feature of Indian life from early times. The vast architectural remains in Java and Cambodia, which excite the wonder and admiration of travellers, are monuments of the colonization of those countries more than a thousand years ago. Those and other streams of Indian colonists went forth to spread Indian culture and civilization among rude nations and left their impress for centuries on the political and religious life of those countries their languages and literatures. '

But in modern times emigration is the result rather of the poverty and hunger of India, which drives hundreds of thousands across the seas to seek a bare subsistence in strange lands. Ceylon, being the nearest to India, naturally attracts the bulk of the emigration, but the stream flows into remoter regions, flows into the Atlantic and the Pacific, no less than the Indian Ocean. The Malay States, Fiji in the Pacific beyond Australia, Mauritius near Madagascar, Natal and other parts of South and East Africa, Jamaica and other West Indian Islands off North America, British Guiana in South America, all owe their prosperity to the poor Indian cooly.

There are probably close on two million Indians beyond the seas. The majority of these are

Tamils. I have heard it stated that it should be a matter of pride to the Tamil race to have contributed so large a proportion of these "builders of Empire". Ought it not rather to be a matter of sorrow to us that in Tamil land and in the greater part of India the masses of the people are steeped in such poverty and misery as to be forced to seek relief in emigration? The cooly's lot is not an enviable one. Being poor, ignorant and helpless, he is unable to protect himself against the cupidity and tyranny of unscrupulous recruiters and bad employers. If he is so fortunate as to have a good master (and there are many good masters), he thrives and prospers, for he is industrious sober honest and obedient; but if his lines are cast uncle; a bad or careless master, he suffers infinite misery from which he finds in death a welcome relief.

The Indian Government has taken elaborate measures to protect these helpless people, but owing to the distance of the Colonies, the indifference and lack of sympathy on the part of the local Governments, the all-powerful influence of the capitalist employers, the Indian Government have found their best efforts foiled. You have heard of the sufferings of the Indians in South Africa, of the self-sacrificing labours of Mr. Gandhi. Within the last few months two philanthropic Englishmen, Rev. Messrs. Andrews and Pearson,

have been to Fiji to get first-hand knowledge of the condition of the Indian cooly in his colonial surroundings, and have written a moving report as to the degrading and miserable conditions in which he lives.

But amid all this squalor, physical and moral, these visitors noted with pleasure and admiration sweet blossoms of love and purity. The Rev. Mr. Andrews says: "The religious sense among the people ever welling up in their lives has been the sap in the tree of Hindu civilization. It has produced an almost unrivalled expansion of the intellect and emotion, which has left its mark upon the common people. Even to this day this intellectual and artistic aspect of life is found to be flourishing in most unlikely quarters. I have found here, in Fiji, among indentured coolies-Hindu men and women whose hearts are filled with poetry and nature and love of God. The beauty of the rivers and the sunsets and the sea and the clouds and the night with all its stars has not been lost upon them. They have frequently spoken of these things to me in simple and natural ways. One of them, a mere lad, told me that everything that God had made was beautiful in Fiji and man alone was vile. We knew which man he meant." Again the Report says: "Through all the evil

and misery of their fate they have kept the soul of goodness. Every now and then some beautiful action would come to light which showed that the sweetness of human relations had not been lost, and that the pure ideal of womanhood still held its ground." "It was the scene of that group of Indian coolies, who came many miles to see us and brought with them the widow and her little daughter whom they revered and loved; with an extravagance, that was out of all proportion to their wealth, they were willing to pay any sum if only the wish of the widow may be granted, and she might not be compelled to leave the piece of ground where her husband had lived and died."

You will be glad to learn that now at last the Indian Government has been obliged to declare that the system of indentured labour, under which the coolies are kept practically in a state of slavery, must be abolished. This step, taken by Lord Hardinge on the eve of his departure from India, is one of his most valued, parting gifts to the people. Lord Hardinge said: "No one who knows anything of Indian sentiment can remain ignorant of the deep and genuine disgust to which the continuance of the indentured system has given rise. Educated Indians look on it, they tell us, as a badge of helotry. This is



soon to be removed forever, and it is a source of deep personal satisfaction to myself that one of the last official act that I shall perform in this country is to tell you that I have been able to do something to ensure that Indians, who desire to work as labourers in the tropical colonies may do so under happier conditions, and to obtain from His Majesty's Government the promise of the abolition in due course of a system which educated opinion in India has for long regarded as a stigma on their race."

This was the first of the objects for which Mr. Swaminathan started his journal, and he is to be congratulated on the success which has been achieved through the co-operation of hundreds of philanthropic Englishmen and Indians throughout the Empire. But even when no indenture labour is permitted but only so-called free labour as in Ceylon and to some extent in the Federated Malay States, there are many hardships and evils calling urgently for redress. We have had a rather lurid light thrown on them by the recently published Report of the Ratnapura Labour Commission. I have not the time to dwell on it now. I recommend you to read it. It shows that even under a Government, so careful of the immigrant cooly's well-being as the Ceylon Government, serious abuses may flourish. The

Police Magistrate, Mr. A. L. Crossman, whose exposure of them led to the appointment of the Commission, received scant courtesy from the Commissioners; I do not hesitate to say that Mr. Crossman's conduct in standing up for the poor coolies and protecting them against powerful interests is worthy of the best traditions of the Ceylon Civil Service; and I for one as an old Civil Servant, am proud of him.

The facts brought to light by the Commission and the facts revealed from time to time in the cases under the Labour Ordinance reported in the papers, show how necessary it is for the public to watch closely the working of the Ordinance and the relations between employers and employees and to help the efforts of Government and its officers against the tendency, which is not peculiar to any country or people, of the capitalist employer to exploit labour harshly, especially if it is unorganized and weak. It is an anomaly and a hardship that our law has invested a purely civil contract between master and servant with criminal liabilities, which press all the more heavily on the cooly because he is poor and illiterate, and that the labourer, even if a woman or a minor, should not only be liable to be sent to jail, but should actually be sent to jail with hard labour, for breaches of the civil

contract. Not long ago the Ceylon Government saw the hardship of it and proposed to give women and minors relief. If I remember rightly, the Planters' Association was consulted and agreed to it; but apparently it has been lost sight of in the troubles, imperial and local, which have distracted the attention of Government. I cannot find that legislative effect has been given to their intentions.

The Viceroy of India mentions in his speech that the Fiji Government has abolished imprisonment as a punishment for labour offences, and that the Secretary of State for the Colonies has directed the Governments of Jamaica, British Guiana and Trinidad to eliminate from their statute books, before the end of the year, the power of imprisonment for labour offences. I do not know if similar instructions have come to Ceylon. But I am sure that the Government of Ceylon will not be behind that of Fiji, and will take early steps to relieve not merely women and minors, as originally proposed, but all labourers from this cruel and degrading punishment. I have said enough to show that the conditions of "free labour" require close and constant scrutiny and that to this public attention must be turned, now that indentured labour is doomed.

Among the other objects advocated by Mr. Swaminathan's journal are the encouragement of the emigration of educated men and skilled labourers, the collection and dissemination of information from all parts outside India as to the facilities for study in arts and crafts, for trade and industry, the bringing about of a closer acquaintance between Indians abroad and Indians at home, the creation of an emigration fund for the benefit of selected emigrants, and the advocacy equal rights of British citizenship within the Empire. All these are objects of great importance and should be strenuously worked for. The journal has now been in existence close on two years, and the necessity has been felt for the establishment of an organization embracing workers in all parts of the Empire to carry out these objects effectively. This is the special reason for his appearance before you today.

He proposes to establish a Society called the *Indian Colonial Society*, and is today inaugurating a series of lectures which will be followed up in the Malay States, to which he is presently going, and other Colonies and in India. This organisation should have been started long ago. But better late than never. I need not say that we, in Ceylon, wish him all success. We are specially concerned in the establishment of

equal rights of British citizenship within the Empire. Unfortunately, this does not exist at present, as you would find if one of you attempted to enter Australia or Canada or South Africa. Whatever your merits and qualifications, however great your character, learning and social position, the colour of your skin will bar you entrance effectively, unless perhaps you are armed with a special licence from the Governor-General of the Colony. That is a state of things not to be tolerated by any self-respecting person. It is, I know, deplored by Imperial statesmen, and will, I hope, be one of the first things to be mended at the close of this war, in which Indians and Ceylonese are serving side by side with Englishmen, Australians, Canadians, and shedding their blood in defence of our common King and Empire.

It will be a great thing if by means of such an Association, with branches in every Colony, every Indian throughout the world, however humble his lot, is made to feel that he has a friend to watch over his interests, a friend to turn to in distress, and every employer too may look to this Society for a supply of labour free from the pernicious influence of cooly-hunters and for the preservation of harmonious relations between employer and employed. Such a

Society, while thus serving the material interests of both parties, will see that the Colonial Governments make due provision, now almost wholly lacking, for the education and moral uplift of the immigrant population. Still more, it will help to keep Indians throughout the world in touch with the Motherland and her ancient traditions and ideals, and to maintain and spread that "Spirit of India", which is her greatest treasure and has made her the salt of the earth; that spirit which is not deceived by the glamour of wealth and power, of material progress, of mastery of sea and air and engines of destruction, but amid all this mad turmoil still clings to the things of the Spirit, still finds its happiness in the duties of the home, the farm and the craft, and its riches in a simple life.

## **XVI. Imprisonment for Labour Offences**

*[Sir Ponnambalam, in the course of his other social activities, carried on at this time a brisk correspondence with Government on the subject of the imprisonment of women and children for offences under the Labour Ordinance.*

*The following is a portion of a speech which, as Chairman of the Ceylon Social Service League, he delivered on the occasion of a lecture on the "Ideals of Social Service" by Professor G. H. Leonard of the*

*University of Bristol at the Pettah Library, Colombo,  
on 10th August, 1916, under the auspices of the  
League.]*

Sir Ponnambalam said:-

“There are other aspects of the League's work with which I will not trouble you. But there is one important question which has engaged its attention and in which we earnestly ask the co-operation of Professor Leonard and his friends in England. It will be a surprise to him to learn that, in this, the premier Crown Colony of the Empire, after over a hundred years of British Rule, there is a labour system which in some of its aspects is little better than an organized slavery, though it lurks under the name of 'Free Labour' and that breaches of civil contracts are punishable and are daily punished with imprisonment at hard labour. He will be still more surprised and shocked to learn that under these system even women and children are sent to jail with hard labour.

"I hold in my hand an advertisement which appeared in a daily paper a few days ago, which recalls the slavery days in the Southern States of America. It offers a reward of Rs. 50 and expenses paid to any person who arrests half-a-dozen bolted coolies from an estate in Matale. Among them is a

woman who is described as 'sickly, with a baby in arms and a boy eight years old and a girl three years'. I wonder that the Superintendent of the Estate was not ashamed to insert such an advertisement and to organize a hunt for a poor sickly woman with a baby in arms and burdened with two more children. No, I do not wonder at this. The Superintendent knew the Ceylon public. They are so demoralised and dead to all right feeling that they see nothing out of the way in such a proceeding.

"On the 18th May last and again on the 9th June, the League addressed the Government in behalf of cooly women and children imprisoned for labour offences, and begged for remission of the unexpired portion of the sentences on these women, two of whom were sentenced to a month's rigorous imprisonment each by the Police Magistrate of Badulla on a charge-you will hardly believe it--of insolence, and the third by the Police Magistrate of Kandy to a like sentence for quitting service without notice, she being further ordered to go back to the Estate on the expiration of her sentence.

"It was pointed out to Government that the unfortunate women were compelled to herd with prostitutes and other bad characters in jails; that the Government of Fiji had abolished imprisonment as a



punishment for all labour offences, and that the Secretary of State for the Colonies had directed the Governments of Trinidad, British Guiana, and Jamaica to eliminate from their statute books, before the end of this year, the power of imprisonment for labour offences.

The appeal of the League was not in vain.\* On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July it was resolved, on the motion of Rev. W.H. Rigby, that the infliction of imprisonment for labour offences, *i.e.*, for acts which are scarcely more than breaches of a civil contract, is unjustifiable, cruel and degrading, and especially so in the case of women and children, and that the Chairman and the Secretaries do take such measures as may be necessary, to secure that this form of punishment for labour offences be eliminated from our statute book.

“This is not going to be an easy business, for the capitalist interest here, as everywhere else, is overwhelmingly strong and as I have said, our form of slavery hides its head under the name of ‘Free Labour’. We shall need the support of all noble men and women of England, the champions of the poor and the outcast in all lands, to eradicate this cancer

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\* In a subsequent case reported by the League, H.E. the Governor was pleased to remit the unexpired portion of a sentence of two months’ rigorous imprisonment on a woman with a baby at the breast.

from our beautiful Island. I feel sure that we can count on the support of Prof. Leonard and all whom he can influence.”

[And Sir Ponnambalam addressed the Government as follows on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1916.]:-

Sir,

I have the honour to forward herewith, for the information of the Government, the following extract from the minutes of the meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> instant of the General Committee of the Ceylon Social Service League, including a resolution passed regarding the Draft Ordinance amending the Ordinance No.11 of 1865 published in the *Ceylon Government Gazette* of 25<sup>th</sup> August, 1916.

"9. Read the correspondence of the League with Government, with the Acting Police Magistrate of Avissawella and others on the subject of imprisonment for labour offences, and the Despatch of the Secretary of the State for the Colonies to the Governor of Fiji, dated 24th March, 1916, intimating his decision that power to imprison for labour offences must be definitely eliminated from the labour laws of Fiji, British Guiana Trinidad and Jamaica before the end of this year.

"10. The Committee then considered the Draft Ordinance published in the *Ceylon Government*

*Gazette* of 25th August amending the Labour Ordinance No. 11 of 1865.

"11. Resolved that the League (1) thanks the Ceylon Government for the Draft Ordinance to amend the Labour Ordinance, published in the *Ceylon Government Gazette* of 25<sup>th</sup> August last, for the relief of women and children from imprisonment but (2) considers that the proposed relief is inadequate, and (3) recommends to the Government (a) the omission of the two provisos of sub-clause 2 so as to make the relief complete, and (b) the extension of the relief to male adults; and (4) confirms its instruction of 6<sup>th</sup> July to the Chairman and Secretaries to take all necessary measures to secure that this form of punishment for labour offences be eliminated from our Statute Book."

2. In terms of Mr. Bonar Law's directions imprisonment for labour offences has been entirely abolished in Fiji, and the Governments of British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica are arranging to abolish it before the end of this year by the Viceroy of India, Lord Hardinge, in the Imperial Legislative Council.

3. Annexed (p.xxvi) is an extract from the *Ceylon Times* of the 9<sup>th</sup> instant reporting a speech of the new

Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, at a recent meeting of the Council. He shows himself no less keen than his predecessor in his solicitude for the welfare of the Indian labourer abroad and desires to be guided in the matter by Indian public opinion. "The conditions," he said, "under which we are to allow labour to be recruited in India and under which it should be employed in the Colonies, are peculiarly matters on which Indian public opinion has every right to be heard and on which we desire its full expression as an aid to us in formulating our proposals."

4. Indian public opinion is very sensitive to the conditions of Indian labourers abroad, and was instrumental in securing for the coolies in the four Colonies mentioned immunity from imprisonment for labour offences. Mr. Bonar Law, in his Despatch to the Governor of Fiji referred to above, mentions that "the Secretary of State for India is satisfied that it would not be possible for the Government of India to continue to defeat, by a bare official majority, resolutions in their Legislative Council urging the abolition of indentures, that in his opinion the strong and universal feeling in India on the subject made it a question of urgency and that he has accepted the conclusion that indentured emigration must be abolished."

5. There can be little doubt that when the facts, as disclosed, e.g., in the Report of the Sabaragamuwa Commission and in the Press reports and discussions of labour cases, are known to the Indian public and Government, the circumstance that labour is called "free" in Ceylon and "indentured" in the other Colonies will not prevent the same pressure from being put on the Colonial Office in regard to Ceylon. Now that the Ceylon Government has taken steps towards relieving women and children from imprisonment for labour offences, it will be a gracious thing, and also good policy, to go further and at one stroke eliminate this cruel and degrading form of punishment entirely from our Labour laws. There will be opposition from many employers as there was in the other Colonies, but it is doomed to failure here as there. The League is in correspondence with Members of Parliament and other public persons and bodies in Great Britain to strengthen the hands of Government in fully carrying out their wise and humane policy.

6. It is much to be deplored that an appreciable number of employers in Ceylon depend, not (as wise employers do) on good wages and considerate treatment but on the power of imprisonment, for the management of their labour, and have brought the

fair name of Ceylon into disrepute, made the recruiting of labour in India increasingly difficult, and rendered inevitable the intervention of the Indian Government. This is in fact foreshadowed in the Viceroy's speech and expected by thinking men among the planting community. "We are astounded," says the *Ceylon Times* on the 9<sup>th</sup> instant, speaking of the recent Planters' Association meeting, at the way in which Mr. Coombe thinks the planting community should meet, or rather not meet, the menace of restrictions on emigration by the Madras or Indian Government. Certainly this menace is by far the strongest argument that has yet been brought in favour of legislation. (After referring to the Viceroy's speech) "Does not the Viceroy's utterance clearly indicate the necessity for our putting our house in order as soon as possible?" Mr. Coombe himself said: "The Sabaragamuwa Commission vindicated the Tamil coolies in that district and brought to light unscrupulous behaviour of one of the planting community." Another speaker, Mr. E. E. Megget, said: "So far as he had seen labour conditions in other parts of the world, the labour laws in Ceylon were a disgrace to the Island."

7. Under the wholesome influence of legislation abolishing the power of imprisonment and providing for decent wages and comforts, even the bad

employer will find himself benefited by the greater efficiency and value of labour and the attraction of more labour from India. He will begin to feel kindly towards the poor Tamil coolies as all good planters feel, one of whom writes to the Ceylon Times of 11th August : "The labourer is worthy of his hire, and no labourer more worthy than the Tamil cooly on our tea and rubber estates. He is our wealth, he it is who pays us our fat, oft-times bloated, dividends. He it is who has made Ceylon what she is. Ramasamy is our capital. And Ramasamy's price is only £2 per acre, if that, and we hum and, haw as to whether we can afford it! Let us give him his hire, he has surely earned it, aye, and 'paid' for it in many a new district! But if not of our gratitude, then of our selfishness, (it is for *our* ultimate benefit that we now seek to improve Ramasamy's prospects)-no matter the reason, so long as we give it and make a fresh clean start."

8. As to \_the Draft Ordinance, so far as it deals with women and children, the League takes strong exception to the first proviso, as giving a loophole for the imprisonment of women and young girls and defeating the merciful intention of Government. Under this proviso a female of 16 or over may be sent to jail without hard labour on a second

conviction for drunkenness, insolence or any other misconduct, tending to the disturbance of order or discipline. A harsh or unscrupulous employer balked in his first attempt to run her into jail according to the time-honoured practice now to be abolished, will find no difficulty on the second attempt. A case of insolence or misconduct tending to the disturbance of order or discipline is easily made and established. The accused in labour cases are usually poor, ignorant and undefended, and the Magistrate is pressed with more important work, unable to see their point of view, and impatient of their "petty grievances." Time after time Magistrates have been known to impose sentences of rigorous imprisonment on women and children which the Supreme Court has on appeal reduced to small fines; and in the majority of cases the defendants are too poor to appeal. The *Ceylon Times* of 29th August reports two cases disposed of in appeal. A mother and daughter were charged in the Court below with quitting service without notice or reasonable cause and were each sentenced to six weeks' rigorous imprisonment. The Supreme Court reduced the sentence to a fine of five rupees and observed that punishment by way of imprisonment was quite unsuitable.



9. As the maintenance of discipline appears to be the reason for the proviso in question, the League suggests that it will be simpler and more effective to turn the offender out of the estate. It is a poor sort of discipline that needs to be maintained by sending a female to jail. If it be objected that her expulsion from the estate might mean the loss of advances, that is scarcely a sufficient reason for subjecting a woman or girl to the degradation of jail life and to the brand of the jail. If she has committed an offence which under the general law deserves imprisonment, there will be little or no objection to its infliction. But the League can find no justification for a purely labour offence being so treated and for the perpetuation of a practice: inconsistent with the dictates of humanity and condemned by all civilised people, and is confident that the proviso will be strongly objected to by the Indian Government and public.

10. The League would in this connexion ask that steps be taken, so that in no case shall a female be arrested or removed by, or placed in the charge of, males unless accompanied by a matron of the Fiscal's or Prisons' Department. In the absence of such precaution women are exposed to serious dangers until they reach the safe precincts of a Court or of a principal jail.

11. The second proviso empowers the Police Magistrate to apply the provisions of the Youthful Offenders Ordinance, 1868, to offenders under the Labour Ordinance.

The object of the proviso is not understood. The former Ordinance is applicable only to children between 7 and 16 years of age, and its object is stated in the preamble to be "to provide for the due punishment and reform of youthful offenders and to establish reformatories and industrial schools for their benefit." The detention in such institutions must under Section 19D be for not less than two and not more than five years, and is obviously unsuitable for a boy or girl guilty of a labour offence. In lieu of such detention the Court may order a youthful offender (a) to be discharged after due admonition or (b) to be delivered to his parent or guardian with surety for good behaviour for a period up to twelve months or (c) to be whipped, if a male, with a light cane up to ten strokes. (a) requires no special legislation; (b) and (c) are scarcely necessary. The general provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code should in any case be sufficient. The League is, therefore, of opinion that the second proviso should also be deleted.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,  
P. ARUNACHALAM,  
Chairman.

(Extract from the "Times of Ceylon" referred to in para 3, above.)

At the meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council at Simla, on September 8th, the Viceroy (Lord Chelmsford) referred to the question of emigrant labour as follows:-

"One of the most important questions now occupying the attention of my Government and of Provincial Governments, whom we have addressed on the subject, is that of a scheme to be substituted for indentured emigration, as it is sometimes described. This is, perhaps, hardly a correct way of putting it, as it implies that we are trying to work out a scheme for the purpose of supplying labour to the Colonies, whereas the scheme we are contemplating relates to a very different matter, viz., the control of the operations of persons so engaged. Labourers have a right to emigrate if they wish, and it would be very unwise and very undesirable on our part to prevent them, and we are therefore trying to devise arrangements which will secure that recruitment in this country is conducted

under decent conditions, that a proper sex ratio will be maintained, and that on arrival in the country of their destination they will be properly treated and allowed to engage themselves on terms at least as free as those obtaining at present in the Malay Peninsula, where a labourer can leave his employer by giving a month's notice. These are the conditions which in our letter to local Governments, we explained are regarded by the Government of India as necessary for a satisfactory system of emigration. I think it will be clear to all who have studied the question, that the Government of India would be departing gravely from its duties if it allowed emigrant labourers to leave this country without proper protection and safeguard. There are a certain number of labourers, I believe a very small number, who emigrate as genuine free labourers, that is to say, unassisted by pecuniary help and uninvited by any interested agency; but if we can confine ourselves to the abolition of our existing indentured emigration, a position will arise in which parties interested in procuring Indian labour will be free to induce labour to emigrate by pecuniary help under any conditions they like, so long as the labourer does not go under indenture. The abuse likely to arise out of such a state of things would be very serious. I need only refer to the state of affairs which existed before the

amendment of the Assam Labour and Emigration Act in connection with so-called free labour. The consequence of this system was, as Sir Charles Rivaz put it in his speech before the Legislative Council in 1901, that a horde of unlicensed and uncontrolled labour purveyors and recruiters sprang into existence who, under the guise of assisting free emigration, made large illicit gains by inducing, under false pretences, ignorant men and women to allow themselves to be conveyed to Assam. These emigrants were, it is true, placed under labour contracts on arriving in that province, but the abuses complained of were in connection with the recruitment and not with the contract. Similarly, when the system of indentured emigration first arose in India the only precaution required was that intending emigrants should appear before a Magistrate and satisfy him as to their freedom of choice and their knowledge of the conditions they were accepting. It was shown in a report submitted in 1840 that abuses undoubtedly did exist in connection with recruitment in India, abuses which the constantly increased safeguards provided by successive acts of the Legislature were designed to correct. Uncontrolled recruitment cannot, it is clear, be permitted under any circumstances. Lord Hardinge promised, and I associate myself with him to deal with certain points

raised by my honourable friend Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya during the last Session of the Legislative Council. These points were the better supervision of Colonial recruiting in India the insertion of information regarding the penal conditions attaching to the labour contracts in the indenture signed by the intending emigrants, and the undesirability of labourers in the Colonies being compelled to do work repellent to their caste, ideas and religious beliefs. Regarding the first matter we have already consulted Local Government very fully when asking their views as to the precautions which will be required after the abolition of indentured emigration. As to the second point you are no doubt aware that Fiji has now abolished imprisonment for labour offences and other Colonies are arranging to follow suit; but there will still be certain provisions remaining which, we think, should be brought to the notice of the intending emigrants, and we have arranged to do this as soon as the various Colonial Legislatures concerned have passed the amendments to which I have alluded. We have also asked the Secretary of State to press the third point on the attention of the Colonial Government concerned. I should like to say just one more word about the reference we are making to Local Governments. The conditions under which we are to

allow labour to be recruited in India and under which it should be employed in the Colonies, are peculiarly matters on which Indian public opinion has every right to be heard and on which we desire its full expression as an aid to us in formulating our proposals. We have, therefore, asked the Local Governments to consult private persons and associations who are specially interested in, or have special knowledge of, this important question, and we hope that the case which we shall be able to put forward for the discussion which will shortly take place on this subject in London, will represent not only the result of our own experience and judgment, but the views of the most intelligent sections of the Indian Community."

## The Labour Movement

*[Sir Ponnambalam, who, in June, 1919, had unanimously been selected the first President of the newly formed Ceylon Workers' Welfare League, presided at a lecture by Mr. C. F. Andrews on "The Labour Movement" at the Tower Hall on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1920, and introduced the lecturer as follows.]*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Andrews scarcely needs an introduction to you. The fame of his work in India and the Colonies has preceded him and our newspapers have given us glimpses of some of his activities here. He has made it his life's mission to promote the welfare of the working classes of India and of the countries to which the working classes of India emigrate. And in the prosecution of that mission he has travelled to far-off

Fiji, South Africa, the Malay States and so on, and in the prosecution of the same mission he has come here at the invitation of the Ceylon Workers' Welfare League. I may take this opportunity to correct a misconception given currency to by the "Times of Ceylon". There is absolutely no foundation for the suggestion that Mr. Andrews' inquiry is limited to labourers employed under Europeans and that he leaves the Ceylonese employers severely alone. There is no reason to suppose that the labourer under a Ceylonese employer is better off than the labourer under a European employer. I do not think that the capitalist has any race or colour, nor do I think that the Government of Ceylon in its relations to labourers is quite irreproachable. Those who know Mr. Andrews know he is not the man to put up with any differentiation or restriction in the discharge of his duties. He has, as a matter of fact, visited Ceylonese



estates as well as European estates and come in contact with all kinds and conditions of men. His aim and the aim of the League is to ascertain the truth and nothing but the truth. His instructions are to survey as far as practicable the whole field of labour, its living and working conditions, and especially the bearing on them of the penal clauses of the Labour Ordinance and the question of a remunerative wage. He has discharged that duty admirably, and the most hardened employer must be disarmed by his sincerity, humanity and common-sense. Already much of the prejudice, official and unofficial, has been dissipated. I think there is little doubt his work will result in infinite benefit to our working classes and that his mission will in future years be deemed a landmark in the history of Ceylon. (Applause). The subject on which he is going to speak to us is one on which he is peculiarly qualified to speak. He has almost unrivalled experience of labour and has devoted much hard thinking to its problems. What he has to say will be both an education and an inspiration to us all.

## **XVII. Address at Reception to Col. Wedgwood**

*[At a Public Meeting of the Ceylon Workers' Federation convened for the reception of Col. Wedgwood, M.P. and Mrs. Wedgwood, on 28th January, 1921, at the Olympia Theatre, Colombo, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, the President of the Federation and Chairman of the meeting, welcomed Col. and Mrs. Wedgwood in the following terms]*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Ceylon Workers' Federation I offer you a hearty welcome to Ceylon. I consider myself greatly privileged to be their spokesman on this occasion. The Federation welcomes in you a delegate of the great British Labour Party sent out to study and improve the conditions of the millions of their helpless brother-workers in India and Ceylon and ask you to convey to the Party the grateful thanks of the workmen of Ceylon for the interest taken in their welfare. Great power and responsibility have been won by the Labour Party and still greater power and responsibility await them.

The destinies of the British Commonwealth and of the world will soon be in their hands. This Federation has watched with admiration the manner in which the Party has cast its influence on the side of freedom, justice and humanity throughout the world

and striven to keep in check the exploiters and oppressors of peoples. The Federation welcomes you, Sir, personally as a life-long worker for the oppressed and down-trodden of all lands and as the fearless champion of the British ideals of liberty, self-development and self-determination for all peoples, great and small. These ideals are no mere lip-words with you, as unfortunately they are with many of your countrymen out in the East and even in Downing Street. Our Governor, Sir William Manning, not long ago, addressing in London an Association of businessmen interested in Ceylon, expressed his inability to understand what these words meant. To you at least they are not unintelligible. You have fought for them in and out of Parliament, you have offered your life to maintain them on many a battle-front in the great War; we know you are determined to see them realised in Ceylon as elsewhere throughout the British Empire. Above all, you are the sworn foe of that Mammon of unrestricted commerce and industrial power which exploits the weak and the helpless and regards men and women, not as citizens nor even as human beings, but as tools of economic power-"Cannon Fodder of Industry". We rejoice to see your face, to express to you our profound gratitude for your devoted and strenuous services to Ceylon in the cause

of Temperance, in the cause of Justice outraged during the administration of Martial Law in 1915, in the cause of Constitutional Reforms. The people of Ceylon, I venture to think, are by their ancient civilisation and history, by twenty centuries of autonomous rule before Westerners arrived here, by their advance under British Rule, well worthy of your sympathy and help. As a single instance of what our common people can do even now, I would mention that in one division of the Western Province they have availed themselves so well of the recently granted opportunities of Local Option and worked so splendidly against great odds and against the influence of the Government that in spite of a 75 per cent. vote required they have succeeded in abolishing every tavern in the division.

You are aware that even in Europe the life of the labourer through the centuries has indeed been a *via dolorosa*. His sufferings have forced him to form powerful organisations which are now able to protect him. These have compelled employers and Governments to realise in some measure that labour is not a mere article of commerce, a commodity to be bought and sold, that human life is of infinitely greater value than material wealth, that the health, happiness and well-being of the individual, however

humble, are not to be sacrificed to the aggrandizement of the more fortunate or more powerful. In Ceylon the Government as well as employers are very far from even beginning to understand this. Our labourers in spite of much native intelligence and inherited skill and capacity are ill-educated, disorganised, weak and helpless. Some of us, their well-wishers, felt that it was our duty to protect them until they were able to protect themselves. The attempt was first made through the Ceylon Social Service League which was established in January, 1915. This Association proving after a time inadequate for the purpose, we started in 1918 the Ceylon Workers' Welfare League. This has done excellent work, among other things, inviting that great Christian philanthropist, Mr. C. F. Andrews, to visit the Island and examine the conditions of Indian labour on Ceylon plantations. Early last year it was felt that the time had come to train the workmen themselves to manage their affairs. So this Federation of workers came into existence, and it now consists of about five thousand members in addition to a few of us who stay on to guide and advise them. The Federation has been able to secure a hearing for labourers' grievances from employers and has succeeded in averting or settling many strikes. We are only on the threshold of the workers' organisation for

self-protection. The members are almost exclusively workers in the City of Colombo, and there is no reason why, with the extension of branches throughout the Island, the Federation should not have a hundred thousand members. The subscription is a rupee a year. We are opening next month a Provident Fund, which should be useful to the workers in case of sickness, death, etc., and also in promoting thrift, and which we expect to be joined by a large number.

While the labourers are thus combining to help themselves, it is to be regretted that they receive little or no help or sympathy from Government and continue to be subject to barbarous and iniquitous laws unworthy of any civilized administration. You will be surprised to learn that men and women are subject to imprisonment at hard labour for breaches of civil contract and other acts which are not offences under the ordinary law. The labour laws are at times so abused by unscrupulous employers and unsympathetic Courts that the Ceylon labourer, while nominally free to quit service on a month's notice, is in reality a slave, and especially so in the planting districts, where the employers, uncontrolled by a healthy public opinion and far from Courts, can do pretty much as they please. There are many who are model employers of whom any country may be

proud, and they are to be found both among Europeans and Ceylonese. But you know, Sir, the natural instinct of the average capitalist, whether in the West or East and whatever his creed, race or colour, is to exploit the labourer: and in Ceylon neither the Government nor the law takes much pains to prevent it. These penal clauses have been a public scandal for years. The Government is sensitive to every wish of the European planter or merchant and hastens to satisfy even his whims. But the grievous hardships of the estate labourer leave the Government cold and indifferent. I have pressed this in season and out of season both on the local Government and the Colonial Office and the India Office, but we never got beyond talk. In 1919, when legislation was under consideration to relieve the troubles of employers, the Workers' Welfare League got Mr. Andrews here, and through his intervention there was reason to hope that the penal clauses would be abolished. A promise to this effect was made to me last year in Downing Street by the officials of the Colonial Office. But nothing more has been heard about it. I understand that the legislation is to be postponed owing to the present financial depression of estate owners. It only needs a clause of two or three lines to abolish these hateful clauses.

But it seems this must wait till rubber and tea prices rise to their former level and employers are free from financial anxiety. Meanwhile, what matters the happiness of thousands of wretched coolies? We implore you on your return to England to urge this question upon the authorities and to secure the immediate repeal of the penal clauses.

The financial crisis is being taken advantage of to reduce the miserable wages drawn by the coolies and even to discharge them wholesale. There is no provision under our law for a minimum subsistence wage or to regulate the hours of labour. Children under twelve are forced to labour and were liable, until we raised an outcry, to be arrested on warrants and sent to jail. In December, 1919 the Ceylon National Congress passed an important resolution on labour. It demanded, inter alia, that the conditions of labour should be brought into conformity with the requirements of Section 427 of the Peace Treaty, and the amendment of our labour laws, especially by the immediate repeal of the penal clauses, abolition of child labour under twelve, the provision of compulsory education for children under twelve and of half-time education from twelve to fourteen, the fixing of a remunerative wage by a Wage Board appointed for each district, the regulation of hours of



labour with liberal allowance of rest and recreation, provision for the care of enceinte women and infants and for securing good working and living conditions to the labourer and facilities for prompt inquiry and remedy of his grievances. These are elementary conditions which no civilised Government can hesitate to secure to labour. But this can hardly be expected under an administration which continues to permit the imprisonment of labouring men and women for breaches of civil contract. Much less can we expect provision, such as exists in most Western countries, for sickness and old age. The labourer is helpless and his friends are few and uninfluential, and nothing will be done for him unless the Labour Party in England and influential M.P's like yourself take up his cause and fight for it strenuously against combined capitalist influence and Government apathy. I hold in my hand particulars of the treatment of workmen on the Railway by their employer, the Government. There were about 30 of them with service ranging from 10 to 42 years. In June, 1915, when the Government had worked itself into a panic and was engaged in the blind administration of Martial Law, these men were suddenly arrested without charge or inquiry, deported to a remote province among people with whose language and customs they were unfamiliar, and they

were left to shift for themselves for seven months while their wives and children in Colombo were starving. At the end of that period they were brought back to Colombo and refused employment, and kept under Police supervision. In September, 1916, they were given certificates of discharge by the Government Railway. I hold in my hand a copy of one of them, in which the man is stated to have been discharged on the 24th of June, 1915. He is stated to be a "very good fitter" with service of 13 years 3 months and 12 days (in some of these cases the service is 40 years), pay Rs. 1.75 a day, "attendance: good." Cause of discharge: "services no longer required." The certificate concludes: "This workman should not be employed in Government service without reference to the Head of this Department." This is the excellent example set by Government to employers in this country.

As a contrast to the treatment of these unfortunate men against whom nothing has been proved and nothing charged and who have been ruined for life, I would like to bring to your notice the treatment of the official and other miscreants who during those never-to-be-forgotten months of 1915 committed unheard of outrages,-summary execution of scores of innocent persons and punishment by courts-martial of hundreds of others. These men

Governor Chalmers shielded by an Act of Indemnity secretly obtained from the Imperial Government. He, as well as his successor, Sir John Anderson declared that there was not the slightest stain on the loyalty of the people, and Sir John added that some of the repressive acts had been Hunnish in their violence and injustice and deserved the loathing and disgust of every decent Englishman. None of these miscreants has been punished. The Royal Commission of Enquiry demanded by the people as well as by 40 M. P's. has been refused, and the system of administration which made this misrule possible remains as vigorous as ever. Sir John Anderson, being unable to punish the men who brought so much misery to the people and dishonour to the fair name of Britain, did remove from office some J. P's. and Unofficial P. M's. who were proved to have misconducted themselves. You will be surprised to hear that one of the early acts of Sir John Anderson's successor, Governor William Manning, was to reinstate them in their offices which they had abused. Recently one of these men, still holding the office of J. P. and U. P .M., was guilty of a tavern brawl, assaulting a Railway Stationmaster, interfering with the railway signals to the imminent danger of a coming train, and, when called to account by the Railway authorities, had the impudence to call

it "an abominable lie," and yet was convicted. This worthy gentleman whom the Press of his own countrymen has denounced remains in the enjoyment of his high office, while the poor railway workmen, absolutely innocent of any offence, are thrown on the streets with their families.

It is in the hope of preventing or at least mitigating such injustice and hardships that many of us have worked for Constitutional Reforms, but hitherto we have been sorely disappointed. This Federation cannot thank you sufficiently for your vigorous criticism in the House of Commons of the camouflaged reforms offered by Government and for the promise of your continued endeavours to make the reforms adequate. Your sympathy and support have been a great comfort to us. The Congress scheme provided, inter alia, for a wide adult franchise and of a restricted female franchise. The Government scheme has omitted the female franchise entirely and greatly altered the male franchise, so that the vast majority of the workers will be excluded from the exercise of the vote. The reason that weighed with the Government probably was the old one, that only rich men had a stake in the country and were entitled to vote. But you remember, Sir, what Lord Acton said, that the man

with the greatest stake in the country was the poor man, for he suffered most from maladministration while the rich man was always able to take care of himself. This I know would be your own view and we count confidently on your support in removing these and other excrescences from the reform scheme and in placing Ceylon substantially on the road to Self-Government. I do not wish to stand any longer between you and this vast audience which is eagerly waiting to hear you. I will only repeat once more our profound gratitude to you for coming here tonight and to Mrs. Wedgwood for gracing this occasion with her presence.

### **XVIII. Address at Second Reception to Col. Wedgwood.**

*[A further reception was given to Col. and Mrs, Wedgwood at the Public Hall, Colombo, on 8th February, 1921, when Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, who again presided, delivered the following speech in introducing Col. Wedgwood to the audience]:-*

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
This meeting has been arranged in order to give the general public in our metropolis the opportunity of

meeting and hearing our friend, Colonel Wedgwood, before he finally leaves Ceylon. To him we are under a load of obligation that can never be repaid for his devoted service to Ceylon, to the cause of Labour throughout the world, and of humanity. It is not necessary for me to dilate on those services. They are by this time well known to you. They have been set forth in the Press and by scores of speakers on different platforms throughout the country. I did so myself recently when I presided over the reception given by the Ceylon Workers' Federation. If I was asked to sum up briefly Colonel Wedgwood's status and mission, I would say that he is the Ambassador from the people of England to India and Ceylon to save these countries for the British Commonwealth by bridging the gulf that is unfortunately growing between the British Government and the peoples of these countries, owing to the systematic failure of the officials and other representatives of England to carry out the great English principles of liberty, justice and national self-development, and to their persistence in treating these peoples on lines which lost Britain the United States of America and nearly lost, until there was a total reversal of policy, Canada and South Africa. Col. Wedgwood has visited many parts of this Island and talked to many people, both individually

and in huge masses, both officials and unofficials-and I am sure we should all like to know his impressions and views on the political question which is engrossing our minds. It is to be regretted that he has not been' able to visit the Tamil provinces owing to the shortness of his stay in Ceylon and his crowded programme which left him no margin. He does not, therefore, know accurately the standpoint and views of the Tamils of Ceylon, except so far as he may have learned them from Tamils who have for the most part resided outside the purely Tamil provinces and are not quite in touch with their needs and conditions. That is an element which no doubt will be given due weight to by him in any political estimates he may form. But, after all, as he has often told Ceylon audiences and as I have told them for years ever since we started the Reform movement, we must rely solely on ourselves. Nobody else can help us. We must work, work, work, with disciplined tenacity and self-sacrificing enthusiasm. We must, as Japan did, develop- our own soul, and not seek to borrow another. Think of what Japan has achieved. The whole system of Government and administration was revolutionized by 32 young men- no more. They held aloft new national ideals and broke the conceptions of control derived from the days of chain

armour. They were all obscure youths, without official rank, social distinction or influence. Why cannot we in Ceylon, with traditions and civilisation not less glorious, do what Japan did? We have hypnotized ourselves into thinking that we are weak and helpless. No greater disaster can overtake a people. We must regain our self-confidence. We must feel that nothing can daunt us, nothing is beyond us. In the matter of constitutional reforms, I personally have not much hope from the local Government. For one thing it is a humorous Government. Colonel Wedgwood gave us an instance of its fine humour the other day the great Kandyan joke. Being desirous of giving special and considerate treatment to that important community, they withheld from hundreds of thousands of them the vote which was given to a handful of Sinhalese and Tamil settlers in their midst. There is no end to the humorous pranks of our rulers. It would need the pen of a Swift or Thackeray to do them justice. Think of the humorous poll-tax which falls with crushing weight on the starving peasant or labourer and his family and leaves the rich merchant and broker landowner and lawyer to revel in an Eldorado untainted by income-tax, land tax, or aught save the poll-tax which means to him less than the price of a



cigar. Think of that humorous Waste Lands Ordinance which I have often had to administer as a judge. It is akin to that monstrous robbery which you know, Sir, of the English Enclosure Acts which deprived your poor countrymen of millions of acres which supplied them with pasture, fuel, fodder and even corn and left them only their labour to sell, any attempt to sell it to advantage being checked by cruel laws and punishments. When the Waste Lands Ordinance was under discussion in the Legislative Council, it was vigorously opposed by two unofficial members of the Legislative Council, Mr. P. Coomaraswamy and Mr. Christie, an English planter. They pointed out the evils which have all been realised since, and Mr. Coomaraswamy called the legislation "highway robbery." But their opposition was overruled. The Governor remembered the opposition of Mr. Coomaraswamy. He was afraid to touch the Englishman, but when Mr. Coomaraswamy's five years' term expired, he was replaced by a more amiable Tamil member. This was the only instance in which the five years' rule was enforced, and the lesson was not lost on his colleagues and successors. Many of them have had their terms extended more than once and retired loaded with honours. Was not this excellent fun? I

will not weary you with other specimens of political humour. Recently it broke out in another and unexpected direction. It was wished to signalize a memorable and auspicious occasion in worthy manner, and a spectacle was organised on a great scale. A fit subject for a painter. The painting should be in three pieces. First you see a surging, struggling crowd of men and women racing and falling over each other's heels with trays on their heads containing costly gifts-Gold and Gems and Frankincense and Myrrh -and one man is falling beneath the weight of huge elephant tusks valued at hundreds of pounds and is raised with difficulty, others have similar falls and escape. All causing much fun. The second picture will represent the visions that floated before the competitors of seats in the Executive and Legislative Councils, Knighthoods, J. P .-ships and Chief Headmanships and various honours and appointments and prizes for themselves and their sisters and cousins and aunts. The third picture will show the whole weight of Government brought to bear by my friend, Sir Henry Gollan, the Attorney-General, in the interest of the purity of administration, to enforce the strict regulations of the public service by making examples of a miserable policeman or clerk and his aiders and abettors for

receiving a tiny present. The well-known consequences to them and their dependents will be faithfully depicted. Such pleasantries, political, economic, social or other, can only cease when Ceylon has Self-Government. You know, gentlemen, that I have always been of the opinion that Ceylon is now at the present moment fit for Self-Government. I have frankly acknowledged that if vested with it we would very probably make blunders, and serious blunders. But does not the wise and able Ceylon Government make serious blunders? Does not the British Government in England with its hundreds of years of self-training in Self-Government make blunders? What Government in the world is exempt from them? Why should the prospect of them deter us from demanding full Self-Government as our right? I believe that the masses of our people want it and that they need it for their protection. But unfortunately many of us English educated folk who profess to be their leaders have been so demoralized by generations of rule by others, have had in fact our spinal cord cut so that we cannot stand up erect, we have hardly the self-confidence and courage of our common people and are frightened and shocked at the idea of Self-Government. To placate the timid and secure their co-operation a policy of compromise

had to be adopted which is embodied in the Congress demands as now set forth. Many of us are glad to know, Sir, that you consider our demands to err on the side of moderation. I know of no reason why Ceylon should not at once have the constitution recently granted to Malta and why she should not be, as the Royal Commissioners of 1830 wished and hoped, the political model of His Majesty's dominions in the East, instead of following slowly and at a great distance the track of India.

Whatever the official Congress programme may be, I will not cease to demand full Self-Government and I know that I shall have the vast majority of my countrymen on my side. But at any rate the ridiculous constitution in the Order-in-Council must be radically amended to harmonize even with this limited programme. We are very grateful to you, Sir, for insisting with us on the total abolition of communal and special electorates, on the widening of the franchise, the increase of the number of electoral constituencies, on the necessity for a substantial electoral majority in the Legislative Council and real control over the Government by the Legislative Council and of real responsibility of the Executive to the Legislative Council with Ceylonese in charge of

Portfolios. We are not hungering for the mere loaves and fishes of higher appointments. A Ceylonese bureaucracy has no special attractions for us, it would be a bureaucracy still and liable to all the failings of a bureaucracy not responsible to the people. Our people desire to be saved from the tender mercies of a Ceylonese as much as of a European bureaucracy and to have real power in their hands and not in the hands of a privileged few, however much the latter may like it. Assuming that we are not to have at once Self-Government such as Malta is to have, our electoral unit should be not a province but a district or part of a district in addition to the bigger towns, Colombo, Jaffna, Kandy, Galle. In this way it is possible to have between 30 and 40 electoral units with seats open to every race and creed indiscriminately.

I would suggest that about half a dozen additional seats be reserved to be filled up if necessary in certain contingencies-that is to say, if a certain minimum number of Kandyan Sinhalese, Europeans, Mohammedans, Burghers, Indians, is not returned at the general election. It has been suggested that these seats, or rather the difference between the minimum number reserved for each section and the actual number returned, be filled by the Governor's

nomination. I am not in favour of this. I would much rather give the seat to the defeated candidate of that community who has secured the highest number of votes at the election. This will check undue official influence, which is the bane of the nomination system. However, these and other points require careful consideration to work out an effective scheme. I will not detain you any longer, as I am as eager as you are to hear Colonel Wedgwood. I will only say that we all feel that Colonel Wedgwood's visit to Ceylon will be a landmark in our history, and that his passionate love of liberty and justice, his courage and devotion, and altogether his great personality, will be treasured in our hearts as an example and an inspiration to be handed down to our children and children's children.

## Miscellanea

### ‘Real Service to the Empire’

#### Lord Crewe’s Testimony

*[The following letter, which Lord Crewe sent to Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in July, 1922, speaks for itself]*

Crewe House,  
Curzon Street,  
27th July, 1922.

Dear Sir Ponnambalam,

I must now send you my best thanks for the very kind letter which you wrote me on the 3rd of April, which reached me not long after we had sustained the overwhelming blow of the loss of our boy, a loss in which I am sure we shall have had the deep sympathy of yourself and Lady Arunachalam, and you will forgive me for not having replied before.

Your account of the Prince's visit was most pleasant to receive, and he must have thoroughly appreciated the welcome of Ceylon. He was pretty well tired out by his very long tour with its continual strain of appearing in public, but he is none the worse for it, and is now enjoying a real rest.

You must indeed be gratified at the successful close of your long exertions on behalf of the Indian coolies. It is a real service to the Empire to bring contentment to these people who deserve well of us all.

Please give our kind remembrances to Lady Arunachalam.

Believe me,  
Yours very sincerely,  
CREWE.

## Recognition of His Services: References In Parliament

*[Sir Ponnambalam lived to see the fruition in great measure of his arduous and incessant labours in this connection.]*

*Col. Wedgwood made pointed reference to his labours in the House of Commons on 14th July, 1921, when he declared as follows]-*

"I should like in this connection to mention the great work done for these semi-slaves in Ceylon by two men out in India-Mr. Andrews, and the other an old Government Servant, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam. He has gone on year after year, with society after society, pegging away at this question. He is unpopular with Officials because he was an Official. He is educated, he is alive to abolishing this coolie labour, and I congratulate him, as one can from these



Benches, on having achieved the liberation of a large mass of his labouring countrymen.”- (Parliamentary Debates).

## **Constitutional Reform: Sir Ponnambalam's Earliest Labours**

It has sometimes been stated (by those who ought to have known better) that Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam's political activities began only after his retirement from the Civil Service.

Both the statement and the implication are untrue, and constitute a libel on the memory of a man whose patriotism was never dimmed by office as a Civil Servant. It is true, of course, that the rigidity of the restrictions imposed by such office made it impossible for him, while remaining in the Service, to take any part in politics much less to inaugurate any movement of a political character. But he did a great deal of useful work, quietly, in this direction; and it is to his lasting credit that he initiated, in 1902, a movement which showed how much he had at heart the political regeneration of his country.

August 9th of that year was the day fixed for the Coronation of His Majesty King Edward VII and, through the columns of the *Ceylon Observer*-then the

most influential newspaper in Ceylon-Sir Ponnambalam started active propaganda work with a view to secure Constitutional Reform as a "Coronation Boon" for Ceylon.

Writing under date June 4th, 1902, Sir Ponnambalam (over the pseudonym "Reform") asked the Editor of the Observer to use his influence to secure the Reform of the Constitution "as a Coronation Gift to Ceylon," and added:

"Even poor Cyprus has 12 Elected Members in the Legislative Council; yet she has only 400 schools and 19,000 scholars! What a contrast to Ceylon! One at least, or even two, of the Executive Council Members should be elected by the unofficial M.L.Cs as in other Colonies, such as Mauritius, Jamaica and Hong Kong. Queen Victoria [mistake (later corrected for King William IV) gave us the Legislative Council. King Edward should, by reforming it, put an end to the reproach that the Council is practically what it was 70 years ago. I am sure this would add to the contentment and loyalty of the people and provide a necessary and useful outlet for the new forces which England's beneficent administration has called into existence."

In printing this letter the Editor of the Observer (Mr. James Ferguson) stated that its author was "a

Ceylonese gentleman of local standing, for whose cultured intelligence, steady industry and high character we have much respect," and appealing to his readers for further expressions of opinion from representative members of different races and classes as a preparation for necessary action."

Sir Ponnambalam followed this up with a further communication (over the same pseudonym) which was follows:-

## **The Reform Of The Ceylon Executive And Legislative Councils**

Dear Sir,- .You have given a splendid lead, and I for one sincerely hope my countrymen will follow it up vigorously and persevere till success crowns the cause.

Let me give a few further reasons why Ceylon should have a concession such as you indicate-Mauritius, with a population of 380,000 and its educational progress indicated by a school population of 19,000, has a Legislative Council of 28 members, of whom ten are elected, eight ex-officio and nine nominated by the Governor. Ceylon, with a population about ten times as great (3,600,000, with a school population of 210,000), would be moderate in

asking for at least a dozen elected members: one member, as you say, for each of the nine provinces, one for the Planters' Association, one for the Chamber of Commerce, and one for the Colombo Municipality. The nine official members now in Council might be increased by three, and the Governor might retain the power of nominating members not to exceed six, to represent interests which, in his opinion, are not adequately represented by the elected members.

The Council would then consist of 12 officials, 6 nominated, and 12 elected members, or 30 in all, and would make a very representative and useful body, and with two of the unofficial members in the Executive Council should conduce greatly to the good administration of the Island.

The franchise should, as you say, be based on both education (ability to read and write) and property. There are various registers already in existence, of persons qualified to vote at Municipal and Local Board elections, to serve as jurors in the Supreme Court or as Councillors in the Village Councils. The property franchise for the Legislative Council might be assimilated to these: say, possession in the voter's own or his wife's right, or on his mother's (she being a widow and he the eldest son) of immovable property of the yearly value of Rs. 180 or

occupation of property at a yearly rent of Rs. 180 or the possession of a yearly income of Rs. 500.

I rather agree with Mr. George Wall that the presence of the Governor in the Legislative Council overawes most of the members, official and unofficial. On the other hand his presence gives him the opportunity, which he would not otherwise so well have, of knowing local men and things, and this knowledge is of great value in the decision of affairs which after all remains and must continue to remain in his hands so long as this is a Crown Colony.

As early as 1831 the Imperial Commission of Inquiry, on whose recommendations, as you know, our Legislative Council was created and our Judicial system reorganised in 1833, observed:-"The peculiar circumstances of Ceylon, both physical and moral, seemed to point it out to the British Government as the fittest spot in our Eastern dominions in which to plant the germ of European civilisation, whence we may not unreasonably hope that it will hereafter spread over the whole of those vast territories" But India, starting later, has forged ahead and enjoys many Legislative Councils with elected members, while Ceylon has none.

A glance at the following table of figures is sufficient to show how well Ceylon has responded to the British lead and what enormous strides she has made in material and moral progress in the period that has elapsed since the establishment of the Legislative Council. How striking by contrast the stagnation in the constitution of her Government:-

Year	Population	Schools	Scholars	Revenue
1834	1,167,700	1, 105	13,891	3,779,520
1900	3,567,747	3,924	208,533	27,325,930
Year	Expenditure	Tonnage of Shipping entered and cleared	Imports R.	Exports R.
1834	3,348,350	153,510	3,727,260	1,458,340
1900	25,321,988	8,487,940	122,339, 757	94,972,276

During the recent trials of the mother-country Ceylon has given such conspicuous and substantial proofs of sympathy and loyal devotion that I feel sure that a Petition-a representative and respectful Petition-for a Reform of the Constitution on the very moderate lines indicated above will receive the support of Sir West Ridgeway and of Mr. Chamberlain and the gracious approval of H. M. the King.-

Yours truly,

REFORM.

Colombo, June 9th.

*[Partly because of the narrowness of outlook and apathy of the Ceylonese leaders of the day and partly because of the shortness of the interval of time between the inauguration of the local movement and the day of the King's Coronation, the suggested "Coronation Gift" did not materialise. The above however, puts it beyond any manner of doubt that Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam's zeal for the political uplift of his country was not a "new-born" thing, but one which burned within him, as it were, even in the early days of his career as a Civil Servant.*

*As of interest in this connection is printed below the text of the Draft Memorial which represented the early effort made under Sir Ponnambalam's influence to secure a satisfactory measure of Constitutional Reform for Ceylon.]*

To the Right Hon'ble

Joseph Chamberlain,

(His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies)

The humble Memorial of the undersigned  
inhabitants of Ceylon, His Majesty's Loyal and  
Devoted Subjects,

SHEWETH:-

(1) The Commissioners of Inquiry into the Government of this Colony, appointed in 1831, reported (*inter alia*),

“The peculiar circumstances of Ceylon, both physical and moral, seemed to point it out to the British Government as the finest spot in our Eastern dominions in which to plant the germ of European civilisation, whence we may not unreasonably hope that it will hereafter spread over the whole of those vast territories.”

(2) That in pursuance of recommendations made by the said Commissioners, His late Majesty King William IV was pleased to concede a new form of Government to this Colony in the year 1833, and to direct that the Governor should not as theretofore be assisted in his Administration by only one Council possessing both Legislative and Executive powers, but that legislation should be exclusively entrusted to a new Council consisting of fifteen members "of whom nine shall at all times be persons holding offices within the Island, and the remaining six shall at all times be persons not holding any such office"; and the Constitution granted in 1833 has been supplemented by Instructions to successive Governors.

(3) That no material change towards extending the Legislative Council took place until, in 1889, Her



late Most Gracious Majesty, on the recommendation of Governor Sir Arthur Gordon, sanctioned the addition of two unofficial members—one to represent the Kandyan Sinhalese, and the second for the "Moormen" (Arab descendants and Malays).

(4) That so far from Ceylon showing an example to India (and other Eastern dominions) in the working of freer and more liberal Councils, as anticipated by the Commissioners of 1831-33. India has, in some respects, outstripped this Colony and secured greater advantages in her Legislative Councils although in respect of progress in education and material prosperity, Ceylon is well entitled to take the lead.

(5) That, in 1892, the British Parliament passed an Act which increased the number of the members of the Legislative Councils in India and introduced a stronger non-official element, while leaving the question of the election or nomination of unofficial members, to be decided by the local Government in India, in accordance with the needs and conditions of the separate provinces.

(6) That it appears to your Memorialists that the elective principle may, to a modified extent (special qualifications being fixed for candidates and voters), be applied, with safety and advantage to the

Government, to the case of unofficial members of the Legislative Council of Ceylon, and that the Coronation Year of His Most Gracious Majesty King Edward VII, would seem to your Memorialists, a peculiarly fitting season for the granting of a privilege which would be highly prized by His Majesty's loyal subjects of all races and classes in the Colony.

(7) That without entering into detailed statistics, your Memorialists would direct attention to the following comparison as indicative of the different position occupied by the Colony now and when the Legislative Council was first established, and as compared also with a decade back when the two additional unofficial members were allowed:-

		1833.	1891.	1901.
Population	No.	1,126,808	3,012,224	3,567,747
Scholars in Schools	No	13,891	153,843	220,000
Area Cultivated	Acres	456,206	3,007,000	3,375,000
Annual Imports	Rs.	3,208,910	66,635,392	112,626,926
“ Exports	Rs.	1,320,530	58,799,744	102,840,348
" Revenue	Rs.	4,375,550	17,962,710	26,436,712

(8) That your Memorialists would point to the neighbouring Colony of Mauritius, by way of comparison, to show how strong a claim Ceylon has to more liberal Councils:- Mauritius, with a population of 380,000 (of whom 281,000 are “Indians” or

descendants of immigrants from India) and with 19,000 attendances in schools, has a Legislative Council of 27 members, of whom 10 are elected, 9 are nominated by the Governor and 8 are official members; while Ceylon, with a population of 3,600,000 and scholars numbering 220,000, has a Legislature with 9 official to only 8 unofficial members, only 2 of whom can, in any way, be said to be elected, these being recommended by the Planters' Association and Chamber of Commerce. Further, that Mauritius has 2 unofficial to 6 official members in its Executive Council; while the Ceylon Executive is composed entirely of official members. Ceylon is truly called the first of Crown Colonies" because of its population, trade, revenue, and general importance; but in regard to its Legislative and Executive Councils, it will be seen on reference to the "Colonial Office List" that it is behind Barbadoes, British Guiana, Cyprus, Fiji, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands as well as Mauritius.

(9) That your Memorialists would point out that with a carefully-restricted franchise based on education and property combined, there should be no difficulty in holding elections for members for the Legislative Council in most of the 9 Provinces in Ceylon,-say that 6 members should be elected, 1 each for the Western, Central and Northern Provinces: 1

member for North-Western and North-Central, 1 for Eastern and Uva, and 1 for Southern and Sabaragamuwa Provinces; and that 3 additional members should be elected to represent the Colombo Municipality, the Planters' Association, and the Chamber of Commerce respectively.

(10) That apart from these, it would be advisable to continue a certain number-say 6-unofficial members, to be nominated by His Excellency the Governor.

(11) And that further to conserve official influence as centred in His Excellency the President; the official members might be increased to 10, so giving a Legislature of 25 members-10 ex-officio, 9 elected and 6 nominated.

(12) That your Memorialists would humbly pray that at the same time the Executive Council, to advise His Excellency the Governor, be increased by two unofficial members, to be elected by the members of the Legislative Council. It has sometimes happened that, with the advent of a new Governor and Major-General Commanding: there has been an absence of local experience among the members of the Executive Council. The Colonial Secretary and Attorney-General are usually appointed from Britain or other Colonies and not infrequently also the Auditor-

General,-leaving only the Treasurer to be elected from the local Civil Service. The addition of 2 unofficial members selected in the manner pointed out, or by nomination, every five or six years, could not fail to be of advantage in the Governor's Council of Advice, in maintaining a continuity of local experience.

(13) Wherefore your Memorialists, with the fullest expression of loyalty to the King's person and acknowledgment of His Majesty's beneficent rule, would pray for a boon in this the Coronation Year of His Majesty, in the reform and liberalization of both the Legislative and Executive Councils of Ceylon in the directions already specified, and your Memorialists, as in duty bound,

SHALL EVER PRAY,

## Education

### **XIX. A Plea for a Ceylon University**

[The following interesting article by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam appeared in the now-defunct *Journal of the Ceylon University Association*, Vol. I, No. 2, October, 1906-the official organ of the Association that devoted itself to the special object of promoting the establishment of a University for Ceylon.] :-

## I.

The movement in favour of a Ceylon University has made good progress. The University Association was inaugurated in January last. The first number of its Journal appeared in May. The discussions and criticisms which it has elicited show how ripe the country is for the movement, and that forces have been at work in men's minds everywhere which were only waiting to be brought to a focus by the Association.

The objections advanced are that Ceylon is not ripe for a University, that there is not, and will not be for a considerable time to come, a sufficient number of students to feed a University, and that its degrees will have little or no value compared with those of Oxford, Cambridge or London. These objections arise from inattention to the conditions of the problem and from imperfect knowledge of the facts.

To take the last objection first. Did the prestige of Oxford and Cambridge degrees stand in the way of the London University being established in 1836 or of the Durham University being revived in 1831? Oxford and Cambridge men and all public school men have for over two generations turned up their noses at London. But London continues to grow more and more in usefulness and prestige and under the

new statutes of 1900 has received a further development of her beneficent activity. Durham degrees are still of little repute, by the side of those of Oxford, Cambridge or London. Does anybody, therefore, propose to abolish Durham? In recent years we have seen springing up in rapid succession the Victoria University at Manchester in 1880, the University of Wales in 1893, of Birmingham in 1900, of Liverpool in 1903 and Leeds in 1904.

No fear of lack of prestige hindered these Universities from coming into existence. The fact is that the point for consideration in regard to the opening of a new University is not what value its degrees will have, compared with other Universities, but whether it will supply a real want and will contribute materially to the advancement of the people. If five new Universities have had to be created in England within a hundred miles of the older Universities and a few miles of each other, surely a distance of 7,000 miles from England and immense differences of race, religion, language, physical and intellectual conditions, justify the demand for a University in Ceylon. Nobody proposes, even if it were practicable, to force into a Ceylon University those who desire, and can afford to pay for, the superior advantages of an English

University. Such students will be free to do as they like, though they will be better prepared to benefit by study in an English University, if they have had better ground-work than is now available in Ceylon Schools and have received, as Indian students do, their education in a local University. Indian graduates do far better at Oxford and Cambridge than Ceylon students. - within the last six years there have been two Senior Wranglers from India, besides first classes in other Triposes and honour schools- and they are granted dispensations of some terms and examinations.

Those who think Ceylon degrees will have little or no value, forget that, for all practical purposes, degrees (though not so called) are conferred in Ceylon in three important faculties,- . Law, Medicine and Engineering-and have a distinct and very appreciable value. The certificates issued by the Council of Legal Education, the Government Medical College, and the Government Technical College to students who have completed the prescribed courses of study and passed the prescribed examinations, qualify the holders of the certificates to practise the respective professions, and have, at least in Law and Medicine the same value as any British qualification. The aim of a Ceylon University is to concentrate these three faculties and



add to them an Arts faculty and a Science faculty. Is it a less responsible and difficult task to train students and confer degrees in Law, Medicine and Engineering than in Arts and Science? How can our authorities be competent to license men to try their hands at curing or killing patients, at sending men to or saving them from the gallows, and yet be incompetent to impart general knowledge and test proficiency therein? If they are incompetent in this respect, it is a strong reason for making them competent without delay. For a good foundation in Arts and Science should, in any well-organized scheme of education, be an indispensable preliminary to admission to the study of Law, Medicine or Engineering.

The other objection is that there are not enough students for a University. Those who say so cannot have studied the facts. There are at present about 200 students on the roll of the Council of Legal Education, 100 students in the Medical College, 150 students in the Technical College, making a total of 450 students in the faculties of Law, Medicine and Engineering. Last year over 700 candidates presented themselves for the Cambridge Local and London Matriculation Examinations, and over 300 passed. Taking the University course to last four years, there

would be in each year about 300\* matriculated students or 1,200 in the four years. Say that only a third of the number, or 400 students, continued their studies in Arts and Science-an estimate likely to be exceeded if, as in India, the passing of the B.A. or Intermediate Examination is made compulsory for admission to the study of law or the public service. Thus the new University may rely on 400 Arts and Science students, 200 Law students, 100 Medical and 150 Engineering students, or 850 students in all.

A comparison with Universities of the prestige of Oxford, Cambridge or London will hardly be fair, or with Calcutta, Madras or Bombay which have been a half-century in existence and draw their students from larger populations than Ceylon. I have not the figures for the younger Universities of England. But the famous Scotch University of St. Andrew's had in 1904 only 477 students or little more than half the number that Ceylon may expect. The

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\* This does not include the Ceylon Students who pass the Matriculation Examinations of the Indian Universities or the London College of Preceptors' Examinations. The figures are not to be had in the Public Instruction Department. The candidates, or their schools, have direct dealings with the Indian and English authorities. The latest Calcutta University Calendar gives 61 candidates for Matriculation from Jaffna alone. The Ceylon candidates for the Calcutta and Madras Matriculation Examinations and the London College of Preceptors' Examinations are probably about 150 to 200 a year.

University of Melbourne after a half century's existence has 615 students, the University of Adelaide (founded 1881) 622. Can it then be said that 850 students are not enough to maintain a University in Ceylon?

In ten years' time the number will probably be tripled. The University of Madras at its first Matriculation Examination in 1857 had only 41 candidates; at its first B .A. Examination held in 1858 there were two candidates. In ten years (1866) the number of Matriculation candidates increased to 780, the candidates for the F .A. Examination to 149, B.A. 41 and B.L. 12. In another five years (1871) the number of candidates was for the Matriculation 1,793, F.A. 703, B.A. 135, M.A. 6, B.L. 52, M.L. 12. The numbers at present are of course very much greater. But this shows how much riper we are for a University than Madras was when its University was founded, and what is the rate of development that may be reasonably expected.

While Ceylon students alone are more than enough to support a University, it should not be forgotten that the University has other sources to draw from. Ceylon already has numbers of students from Burma, Siam, Cambodia, China, Japan, who are

drawn here by the esteem in which the Island is held in the Buddhist world. Sanskrit and Pali will naturally have professorial Chairs in the Ceylon University, and the prospect of studying on the spot the sacred languages and books of the Buddhists will draw students in increased numbers to the University. One need not be a prophet to anticipate that Ceylon is destined from its central position and its historical and religious associations to be a focus of Eastern and Western culture throughout the East and to exercise a great influence over the world's thought. Perhaps in the course of years, Singapore, Hongkong, the Federated Malay States, Siam, Burma, Cambodia, China and Japan will contribute not only students but endowments to the Ceylon University.

However this may be, I think I have shown that the University, if called into existence to-day, will have 850 Ceylonese students, i.e. more students than there are in some Universities of long standing in the British Empire, that we have at present in Ceylon bodies which practically confer degrees in Law, Medicine and Engineering, and that the proposed University will only concentrate these faculties and add the two faculties of Arts and Science, -in Science being included Agriculture, the efficient study of which is, as

His Excellency Sir Henry Blake rightly holds, a sine qua non to us, an agricultural people.

## II.

At the bottom of the movement in favour of the Ceylon University is the strong and widespread feeling that the holding of examinations is the least important function of a University; that Cambridge, London and other Universities on which we have hitherto relied for our Arts and Science Examinations, restrict their activity, so far as we are concerned, to this function, and this too under conditions which make a degree inaccessible to the majority of our youth; that these Universities know nothing and care nothing about our needs and conditions, and that no education can be fruitful of good which ignores them.

Take e.g. the study of English, a subject of essential importance to us. A knowledge of it is necessary for the earning of a living, but more important still-it is our only avenue to Western culture. If we are not to stagnate, we must keep in touch with the great currents and ideals of this civilisation and try to assimilate it as far as we can.

How does the Cambridge or London curriculum meet our wants? The Cambridge English course is mainly restricted to Shakespeare's plays.

These are all very well for English boys or others who have a sound knowledge of English and are able to appreciate the beauties of Shakespeare. But nothing can be more unsuited than Elizabethan drama to Ceylon youths who are still struggling with the idiom and grammar of the English tongue. What they need is a good working knowledge of modern English. For this they must study modern English Literature and especially prose. Prose is conspicuous by its absence from the Cambridge curriculum. To the Ceylon youth the study of Shakespeare too often means little study or understanding of the text, still scantier appreciation of the charms of Shakespeare's thought or style, but a voracious cramming of the notes plentifully supplied in modern school editions. I have known boys and girls even gain distinctions in English at the Cambridge Senior Local Examination without being able to spell correctly. The London University English course is still less suited to our children: it is far too philological and antiquarian.

No wonder that, brought up on the Cambridge or London *pabulum*, the majority of our youth are unable, after a dozen years' study, to write or speak English correctly or to feel any interest in good English literature, and restrict their reading to the gossip of the daily paper and to trashy novels and magazines. They

remain strangers to Western culture, however much they may strive, by adopting the externals of Western life-dress food, drink, games, etc.,-to be 'civilized' in the Western fashion.

The few who have assimilated Western culture and whose mission it should be to interpret the West to the East, are disqualified for that great office. Having passed through a curriculum in which their mother-tongue is proscribed, they have grown up in deplorable ignorance of it. There is no prospect of the greatest need of the country being supplied-viz. a good Sinhalese and Tamil literature instinct with the best spirit of modern Europe. Only by the creation and spread of such literature can what is good in European civilization be brought within the reach of the people and become, as it has in Japan, part of their life and character and contribute to the vigorous growth of national life.

It has been truly said: "At all times, perhaps, the central point in any nation and that whence it is itself really swayed the most and whence it sways others, is its national literature, especially its archetypal poems... The great literature penetrates all, gives hue to all, shapes aggregates and individuals and, after subtle ways, with irresistible power, constructs, sustains, demolishes at will. Why tower, in

reminiscence, above all the old nations of the earth  
two special lands, petty in themselves, yet  
inexpressibly gigantic, beautiful, columnar? Immortal  
Judah lives and Greece immortal lives in a couple  
of poems... The genius of Greece and all the  
sociology, personality, politics and religion of those  
wonderful states resided in their literature or  
aesthetics. What was afterwards the main support of  
European chivalry, the feudal, ecclesiastical, dynastic  
world,-forming its osseous structure, holding it  
together for hundreds, thousands of years, preserving  
its flesh and bloom giving it form, decision,  
rounding it out and so saturating it in the conscious  
and unconscious blood, breed, belief and intuitions  
of men, that it still prevails powerfully to this day in  
defiance of the mighty changes of time,-was its  
literature permeating to the very marrow, especially  
that major part, its enchanting songs, ballads and  
poems. To the ostent of the senses and eyes, I know,  
the influences which stamp the world's history are  
wars, uprisings or downfalls of dynasties, changeful  
movements of trade, important inventions,  
navigations, military or civil Governments, advent of  
powerful personalities, conquerors, etc. These of  
course play their part; yet, it may be, a single new  
thought, imagination, principle, even literary style, fit



for the time, put in shape by some great Literatus and projected among mankind, may duly cause changes, growths, removals, greater than the longest and bloodiest war or the most stupendous merely political, dynastic or commercial outturn.”\*

### III

It will be a chief aim of the Ceylon University, while making efficient provision for the study of English and the assimilation of Western culture, to take care that our youth do not grow up strangers to their mother-tongue and to their past history and traditions. Here they will learn to use their mother-tongue with accuracy and ease, to appreciate the beauties of their classical languages and literatures, to realize that they are inheritors of a great past stretching back twenty-four centuries and to make themselves worthy of their inheritance. The vernacular literature of the day will then be rescued from its pedantry and triviality and be made a worthy vehicle for the dissemination of what is best in Western and Eastern culture and of the thoughts, hopes and aspirations of our best men and women. Then at last the masses of our people will be really influenced for the better by Western civilization,

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\* Walt Whitman: *Democratic Vistas*.

which seems otherwise likely to leave no more enduring mark than the addition of some European words to our vocabulary and the incorporation of some European customs in our social life.

Another great defect it will be the aim of the Ceylon University to supply-viz. the proper teaching of Science. The first attempt in this direction was made about thirty years ago when, as the result of years of persistent agitation by the late Sir Coomara Swamy, a Science Master was appointed to the Royal College and a Science Laboratory erected. But the study of Science has made little progress since then. It is ignored in the majority of our schools, and in the others the teaching is systematic and unintelligent and has made little impression on our youth. For the practical applications of Science needed by the scientific departments of Government and by the public, officers continue to be imported from Europe, except the few Ceylonese who have been educated out of Ceylon. If these European officers withdrew from Ceylon, with them would largely disappear the scientific applications to which we have become accustomed during the last thirty or forty years.

Science is the most important factor of modern life, and the renaissance of Japan has shown how the life and character of a people may be revolutionized

by scientific study conducted in the proper spirit and manner. I remember as a boy that Sir Coomara Swamy was unceasing in his advocacy of the study of science and in his admiration of the Japanese, whom he held out to us as models. He looked forward confidently to their taking the high place which they have now won. Great was his delight when the first Japanese man-o'-war manned and officered by Japanese called at Colombo on her first voyage to Europe. He invited all the officers to dinner and entertained them. I shall never forget the impression made on us by that scene.

It is little more than a generation since Japan embarked on the policy of seeking Western knowledge. Col. Teruda, who led the First Regiment throughout the siege of Port Arthur, had in his earlier days actually fought in chain-armour and carried a battle-axe. But here we are in Ceylon, after a hundred years of British Rule, still almost as ignorant of Science as if it did not exist. What more can be expected when our educational authorities are profoundly ignorant and contemptuous of Science, and their great aim is to make our youth construe elegantly a bit of Latin or Greek verse?

When at last Science insists on having a place in our curriculum, they select the London curriculum

which prescribes the hardest scientific examinations in the Empire. Not for ten years, if even then, will our schools be prepared to meet its requirements. The study of Science thus stands in great danger of being choked off as Dr. H. M. Fernando, himself a distinguished London graduate in Science, has pointed out. A Ceylon University will not be guilty of such fatal indiscretions. Men who are experts in Science and who have an intimate knowledge of our needs and conditions, will have a voice in framing the Science course. They will frame it to suit our present level of scientific knowledge and teaching and will gradually raise the standard of examination. Thus alone can any real progress be made in scientific study in Ceylon.

#### IV.

The Ceylon University, then, will represent and carry into effect the vital principle of education, that local needs and conditions are the first and most important element for consideration in framing an educational scheme. It is this principle that has for years been violated by the adoption of the Cambridge and London Examinations to the great detriment of the educational life of the Island. This has now become aggravated by the adoption of the whole of the London University curriculum. It is enough

condemnation of this policy that such experienced educationists as Principal Fraser are wholly opposed to it.

The London Matriculation Examination is unsuitable for Ceylon students, because:

(1) The English part of the examination is not designed to meet the special needs of Eastern students;

(2) No provision is made for the study of our mother-tongue (Sinhalese or Tamil), while Latin or Greek or a continental European language is compulsory;

(3) No provision is made for the study of Ceylon History or Geography;

(4) The examination fee £2, or thirty rupees, is beyond the means of the majority of the candidates.

The London intermediate Examination in Arts is still more unsuited, because:

(1) Latin and Greek and one modern European language, in addition to English and Mathematics or Logic, are compulsory, a Ceylon candidate being thus obliged to pass in four foreign languages (two ancient and two modern) a condition required by no other examination in the world and recognized by the London University itself to be so

difficult that it does not impose it on its own internal students.

(2) No provision is made for any Ceylon language, modern or classical, or for Ceylon or Indian history.

(3) The English examination is too antiquarian and philological.

(4) The admission fee of ninety rupees is prohibitive.

The unsuitability, of the Intermediate Examination in Science in our present stage of Science teaching has been admirably exposed by Dr. H.M. Fernando:

"This examination," he said, "has been adopted with an idea that it will foster and encourage Science teaching throughout Ceylon. It is considered an extremely difficult examination in Science even in England where Science teaching has progressed for several decades, and therefore I am firmly convinced that it is extremely unsuited to Ceylon where Science teaching is almost in its infancy. This examination is intended for those who will finally devote themselves as specialists in Science, and hence such an examination with its several optional subjects should have been the last to be selected to act as a stimulus in a country where Science teaching on a systematic

basis is almost unknown. To aim at so high a standard with students so unprepared is to court certain failure.

"It is a fundamental law in Biology that development and progress can only be attained by slow stages and gradations, not by crises and cataclysms. Now what is, true for individuals is also true for aggregates of individuals. All progress therefore in states or amongst nations, political, social, or intellectual, can only be effected by moderately regulated gradations and not by attempts at climbing too high at one leap. The London University Scheme is too high a standard for Ceylon students. The adoption of it will end in disaster, not progress."

I need not dwell on the curriculum of the London B.A. and B.Sc. Examinations. The objections I have mentioned to the earlier examinations apply to these with still greater force. I doubt if there will be a single candidate for the B.Sc. in the next ten years, and probably not half a dozen B.A. candidates in that period. How can such a scheme advance higher education in the Island? Stagnation and even retrogression are far more likely to be the result.

V.

The lines on which the new University should be started, and the probable cost of the Institution have received the careful consideration of the Committee of the University Association, whose conclusions may be stated thus. The University, it must be premised, is to be not merely an examining but a teaching body.

For the former function it is estimated from the experience of other Universities that the cost (of which the main item is the remuneration of examiners) will be met by the fees levied from the candidates for examination. The Indian Universities at the start (with a smaller number of candidates than Ceylon will start with) were not able to meet the expenses of the examinations out of the fees. But within a few years the corner was turned, and for years past a surplus has been realized yearly. The Indian Universities, moreover, received substantial help from Government. The Calcutta University, e.g., received two lacs of rupees last year. This is apart from the expenditure incurred in the maintenance of the Government Colleges. The chief of these colleges, the Presidency College, costs a little over two lacs of rupees of which more than a half is borne by the public exchequer, the balance being recovered from the fees of students.



The scale of fees for the Ceylon examinations may be made higher than in India, where the students are very poor. The Matriculation fee may be fixed at Rs. 15, which is Rs. 2-50 less than the fee for the Cambridge Local Examination and half the London Matriculation fee, but 50 per cent. more than the Matriculation fee of Indian Universities. There were over 700 candidates last year for the Cambridge Local and London Matriculation Examinations. The income from 700 candidates at Rs. 15, would be Rs. 10,750. I doubt if the cost of the examination will exceed Rs. 5,000, allowing for ten papers of questions to be set at Rs. 50 each paper, and 7,000 papers of answers to be examined at half-a-rupee per paper, and Rs. 1,000 for printing and other expenses. There will thus be a profit of over Rs. 5,000. For the Intermediate Examination in Arts and Science the admission fee may be fixed at Rs. 30, and for the B.A. and B.Sc. at Rs. 60. For the professional examinations, the fee might be Rs. 50 for the Intermediate in Law, Medicine and Engineering and Rs. 100 for the Bachelor's Examination. Should there be a deficit, it will be covered by the profit on the Matriculation Examination.

As to the examiners, they will be selected for the professional examinations by the respective

faculties of Law, Medicine and Engineering, the faculties being composed mainly of the present governing bodies of the Council of Legal Education, the Medical and Technical Colleges, with the addition of such other members of the respective professions as the Senate may appoint. The examiners in Arts and Science will be likewise selected by the faculties of Arts and Science. For the Science Examinations the examiners may be found among the Science Professors (hereafter mentioned) of the University, and in the Medical Profession and in the Scientific Departments of Government in the Island. The examiners in Arts may be selected from the University Professors in Arts, from the junior members of the Civil Service who are generally fresh from the Universities and men of high attainments, and from the missionary and educational bodies here and in India. The examinations will be held under the supervision of the Registrar of the University and his staff, and will, I have no doubt, be conducted with greater care and sense of responsibility than is the case with some present day examinations.

The Registrar will have to be not only a University graduate and versed in University matters, but a good business man and administrator, and will

have to be paid adequately to his responsibility. A yearly salary of Rs. 6,000 rising to Rs. 8,000 would not be too much, and his staff would cost about Rs. 3,000, making a yearly charge of Rs. 10,000. This in the earlier years will have to be met out of the vote that Government may allow the University, but later, as the income from the examination fees increases, may be met out of those fees.

The teaching function being in our scheme the more important function of the University, a University College with an adequate staff of Professors is a necessity, and will be the principal source of expense. There is no college in Ceylon, not even the Royal College, which has an adequate staff and equipment. Private colleges can hardly afford the expense. But if they are properly staffed and equipped, they will be constituent colleges of the University; or they may be affiliated to the University up to the Intermediate or B.A. standard according to their qualifications. The Royal College may be the principal college of the University like the Presidency Colleges in India and the University College of London, and its classes and lectures may be open to the University students of other colleges on payment of the prescribed fees.

The staff of the University will probably be as follows:-

Registrar of the University.

Professors.-

1. English Language and Literature.
2. Latin and Greek do.
3. Mathematics.
4. Physics.
5. Botany.
6. Chemistry.
7. Biology.
8. Mental and Moral Philosophy and Logic.
9. History and Political Economy.
10. Sanskrit & Pali Languages & Literatures.
11. Sinhalese Language, Literature & History.
12. Tamil do. do. do.
13. French and German do. do,

Professors 1 to 10 may be paid Rs. 6,000 rising to Rs. 8,000 a year; and one of them will be the President of the College. The pay will be sufficient to attract good men; the status and prestige of a University Professor will be an additional inducement. Professors 11 to 13 may be paid Rs. 3,000 rising to Rs. 5,000. Professors 4, 8 and 9 will probably not have enough work to occupy their whole

time and may be required to help more busy Professors. Thus No. 4 might help No. 3 in his subject; and Nos. 8 and 9 might help Nos. 1 and 2. I have allowed Rs. 8.000 as "contingencies" for Assistant Professors, if needed.

The cost will then be:-

Registrar and Staff	.....	Rs. 10,000 a year
Ten Professors at Rs. 7,000	.....	” 70,000 ”
Three at Rs. 4,000.....	“	12,000 “
Contingencies	... ..	“ 8,000 “
Total cost	.....	Rs. 100,000 a year

The cost will be less, if the Royal College becomes the principal college of the University. The Royal College now costs Rs. 45,000 a year, of which half is recovered in fees. The extra cost of raising it to the status of a University College will be (including the University Registrar) Rs. 55,000, or even less, as considerable expense will shortly have to be incurred in improving the teaching staff of the Royal College to enable it to cope with the London University requirements. Of this extra cost about half will be recovered in fees from the students. The lower school of the Royal College might be retained as the Collegiate school like the University College School,

London, or amalgamated with the English School of the Government Training College.

The extra cost of the University and the development of the Royal College into the University College need, therefore, at the highest computation, not exceed Rs. 50,000 a year. This is a small sum at which to have the advantages of a University and is certainly not beyond the means of so flourishing a Colony as Ceylon. Even if the cost were higher, let us remember that "money spent on higher education is," as Mr. Chamberlain has said, "the best of all possible national investments." If the Royal College is to be the University College, the new building, which is about to be erected for the Royal College, should be so constructed and equipped that it may be utilized for the purposes of the University.

Well-equipped Government Colleges (the Medical College, the Technical College and the Training College for teachers) already exist for the teaching of Medicine, Engineering and Pedagogy, and will take their place in the University, which will confer degrees in these subjects. The Council of Legal Education has abundant funds out of which to establish and equip a Law College, which shall be, like the Medical College, a credit to the Island and the University.

Provision will have to be made for the scientific study of Agriculture, a subject of vital importance to us. We have a well-organized Department of Agriculture, second to none in the East. But its usefulness is far short of what it should be. Its full benefits cannot be realized, until Agriculture becomes a faculty of the University and the scientists of the Agricultural Department are given the opportunity of training students and sending them out to spread the knowledge of agricultural science among the people through the Agricultural Society which Ceylon owes to H. E. the Governor and through the elementary schools which will spring in increasing numbers under the scheme of compulsory education which he has inaugurated. Forestry might also be provided for in the new University. The conservation of our forests is of great consequence to the Island, but the Forest Department is handicapped by lack of trained officers. Raw youths have to be trained for us at heavy expense in the Indian College at Dehra Dun. The latest idea is to import them from Oxford-I suppose on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle. For this, however, the Governor is not responsible. It would seem more reasonable and economical to train our Forest Officers under

competent teachers in Ceylon, where there are forests.

Commercial and industrial education should hold a prominent place in the University. This is a very serious want in the Island. The Sinhalese, with rare exceptions, do not take to commerce. A large share of the commerce of the Island is in the hands of the Tamils, but they are not the indigenous Tamils. The majority of the non-European merchants, bankers, and shopkeepers are Nattukottai Chetties and other South Indian Tamils, and Parsees, Hindus and Mohammedans from North India, who are birds of passage and, like their European confreres, carry away from the Island the profits that, if our people were trained in commerce, would remain and fructify here. The case of industrial enterprise is worse. It is almost entirely in foreign hands. The *raison d'etre* of the newer English Universities at Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Leeds, is the development of commercial and industrial education. If this is needed in Great Britain, which has for generations led the van of the world's commerce and industry, how much more need of it in Ceylon?

Nor, later on, should the claims of the Fine Arts and Music be overlooked by the University. Through them in the ancient and middle ages all over the world,



in the East as in the West, the highest thoughts and ideals realized and expressed themselves even more than through literature. Painting, Sculpture, Architecture still play an indispensable part in the life of every great people. Music- "the art of the prophets," as Luther called it, "the only art which can calm the agitations of the soul," "the mediator," according to Beethoven, "between the life of the Spirit and the life of the senses"-supplies what nothing else can supply. But what a void in Ceylon!

## VI.

When the Ceylon University has been established and is at work, we shall marvel that for so many years we regarded examinations as the be-all and end-all of education and allowed our children, year after year and term after term, to be harassed by examinations which crippled their natural development and crushed all originality and vigour. To apply the term education to this tread-mill is an abuse of the term. Does our system of "education" draw out and develop the natural powers of the mind and the moral nature? Does it provide the instruction and discipline which alone can enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, cultivate the taste and form the manners and habits of youth and fit them for usefulness in their future stations?

In the University, as we conceive it, examinations will be in their proper, subordinate place. They will be fruitful, because they will be conducted, and the courses of study will be prescribed, by officers who know the needs and conditions and idiosyncrasies of our youth and whose duty it will be to consider them alone, undistracted by the requirements of the youth of Great Britain or other countries. But it is the teaching function of the University and its influence on the whole educational life of the Island to which we attach most importance. The University will bring together in one place under the personal influence of Professors of high attainments and culture the best youths in the country. Who that has studied at a European University such as Oxford or Cambridge, Berlin or Jans, Bonn or Heidelberg, does not know how the character and example of the Professors,-true high priests at the shrine of learning,-and the clash of opinions caused by association and discussion with teachers and fellow-students, stimulate intellectual life and create an atmosphere of culture and loyalty to high ideals? This is the most valuable result of University life not the learning of books or the passing of examinations. Who can estimate the loss we have suffered for want of such a fountain of intellectual and moral life? In short, the University will

be the crown of a well-ordered series of elementary and secondary schools and colleges, will systematize and concentrate the energies now dissipated in various institutions for general and professional education and will render it impossible for our schools and colleges to go on in a drowsy and impotent routine but will lift the culture of our people higher and higher by their means. The University will be a powerful instrument for forming character, for giving us men and women armed with reason and self-control, braced by knowledge, clothed with steadfastness and courage and inspired by public spirit and public virtue. The standard of ability, character and general efficiency will be raised throughout the public service and in every profession, the natural resources of our Island will be developed and its prosperity increased and made secure.

If a tithe of the benefits we anticipate is realized, the University will be well worth having at even a hundred thousand rupees a year. May we not hope that, before His Excellency Sir Henry Blake lays down the reins of office, the Ceylon University will be an established fact, and that his name will be for ever associated with it as its Founder and first Chancellor?

**XX. A University for Ceylon: Sir  
Ponnambalam Arunachalam on its  
Urgent Necessity**

*[At a Public Meeting held on Friday, January 19th, 1906, in the Pettah Library Hall, to consider the question of the Establishment of a University in Ceylon, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam who presided delivered the following address from the Chair]*

The movement which we are met here to-day to inaugurate is one of great importance to the future of this Island. Most people are nowadays agreed as to the value of education at least of elementary education. All civilized states recognize it as among the first needs of a people and provide for it. The distinguished statesman who was lately Secretary of State for the Colonies Mr. Chamberlain, declared it to be a national duty to bring to every child in the country the tools wherewith he might carve his way in life. It is necessary, he added, to the welfare and happiness of the nation that every child should have the simple means of recreation which even elementary education affords and the means of further self-improvement. Much has been done in Ceylon by the Government and by Christian and non-Christian bodies to promote

elementary education. Perhaps the most important step taken in this direction of late years is the establishment of the Training College for Teachers which we owe to the energy and foresight of the late Director of Public Instruction, Mr. Burrows, and to the hearty support of the Governor, Sir West Ridgeway,

The College under the direction of Principal Evans is doing excellent work, which in lasting fruit will outgrow far noisier schemes. But a great deal more remains to be done to make elementary education what it should be. It is scarcely creditable to Ceylon, after over a hundred years of British rule, to have only 35 per cent. of our male population able to read and write, while in Upper Burma, which came under British rule scarcely 20 years ago, over 50 per cent. of the male population can read and write. Burma is a Buddhist country and the Buddhist priests, who have had charge of the national education from time immemorial, have indeed deserved well of their country. Would that the same could be said of Ceylon? It is a matter of rejoicing to us all that this is going to be remedied and that the Government is taking steps to make provision for compulsory elementary education throughout the Island. We cannot be sufficiently grateful to Sir Henry Blake for

this wise and beneficent policy, which will place the boon of education within the reach of all and remove a grave blot from the national life and the administration.

Elementary education is an indispensable factor of national progress, but its full benefits cannot be reaped unless on its foundation is raised a noble superstructure of secondary and higher education. What splendid fruits a well-ordered and graduated educational system can yield is exemplified in Scotland, and, still more, in Germany. This is because in Scotland the poorest lad has the opportunity of passing from the elementary village-school through the secondary school into the University, and of enjoying the blessings of higher education. In Scotland alone in the United Kingdom do we see poor scholars flocking, as they did to Oxford and Cambridge three or four hundred years ago, regardless of cold, privation and hardship, to satisfy their hunger and thirst for knowledge.

In Germany higher education is even more widely diffused, with the result that Germany is conspicuous in many fields of human thought and activity. She is a great military power, she is great in literature and philosophy, arts and sciences. Every student knows

that in few branches of knowledge is proficiency attainable without a good knowledge of German, and a study of the German authorities. Even in the paths of commerce and industry, though she entered on them late, she hard presses nations whose supremacy, long established, seemed beyond the reach of competition. So powerfully does German culture attract students from all parts of the world that the steamer in which I travelled last year to Europe carried nearly a hundred Chinese and Japanese students on their way to Berlin, and the only European language any of them knew was German. As examples of the thoroughness with which these Asiatic students carry on their studies, and which we in Ceylon would do well to imitate, I may mention a student who had taken, the Highest Honours in Arts and Law in the University of Tokio, and whose knowledge of Roman Law and Jurisprudence was phenomenal. He yet thought it necessary to proceed to the Berlin University to perfect his knowledge. On his return to Japan he was to be a professor of that branch of law in the Tokio University. Another gentleman, the son of a wealthy merchant at Yokohama, was proceeding to Leipzig to study commerce in the great commercial college of that city, and after completing his course there, was going to spend a year at Hamburg, a year in London

and Manchester and a year in New York and San Francisco to study the practical side of the subject before returning to take charge of his father's business. The high place which Germany has won the direct result of that re-organization of the higher education in her universities which occurred immediately after the Napoleonic conquests at the beginning of the last century, when she lay crumbled in the dust. But for the noble band of University professors who, amid the ruins of their country, set themselves strenuously to form the character and intellect of the German youth, and to erect that educational system which is the envy of the world, there would be no unified German Empire now, and Germany would not be the World Power she is.

Switzerland is another case in point. One of her great statesmen said: "Most of our children are born to poverty, but we take care that they shall not grow up in ignorance"-an observation which we in Ceylon, a poor people, must specially take to heart. With a population not exceeding that of Ceylon Switzerland spends one and a quarter million' pounds sterling on her elementary schools, a quarter million on her secondary schools, and an amount which is said to be considerable, but which I have not been able to ascertain, on the six universities which crown her



educational system, and some of which are of world-wide fame. It is in this way that Switzerland has made up for the poverty of her natural resources, and is able to hold no mean position in the world of commerce and industry.

But the most striking example of what education can do is Japan. By a whole-hearted and vigorous adoption of what is best in Western civilization, a wise mingling of it with what is best in her own civilization, by a complete and well-ordered system of education from the village school to the university, she has within a short space of time raised herself to a proud position among the world Powers. Of the United States of America I need hardly speak. Their enthusiasm for education is too well known. I will only mention that in their recently acquired Eastern possession the Philippine Islands, no less than 20 per cent. of the revenue is spent on education, and a recent steamer brought as many as 40 graduates to take part in the education of the country.

In Ceylon the value of secondary education is sufficiently appreciated. But, unfortunately, the upper limit of this education is the Cambridge Senior Local Examination, and those who desire more have to go out of the Island to Europe or India unless they choose

to join a class preparing for the English University Scholarship, and which leaves all but the successful competitor in a blind alley. There is in Ceylon no "higher education" in the proper sense of the term, though from the number of institutions that call themselves colleges one is misled into thinking there is. The value of higher education is not generally realized. I have sometimes heard it asked by men who have attained distinction in the professions without leaving the Island: "We have got on very well with the education available here. It has produced great men distinguished in their professions and eminently useful to their country. Why do we want a University?" One might reply: "Our ancestors got on very well without the railway and the telegraph, without gas and electricity, without newspapers and cheap books, without the penny post. What do we want these new-fangled things?" If we desire to keep pace with the rest of the world, we must follow the most approved methods of education, utilize the best machinery, and make it available to all, and especially to the children of parents with limited means, for it is among them our best students are found. It is unfortunately too true that the children of the rich care little for education and benefit little by their opportunities, and, with rare exceptions, only swell the idle, useless throng, while

the poor student, having undergone the wholesome training of frugality in youth, and stimulated by his necessities and often by a noble ambition, appreciates education and utilizes it to the fullest measure and rises to be an ornament of his profession and benefactor of his country.

It is not, however, as a means of livelihood, though that is an important aspect of the question and one which appeals to all, that I advocate higher education. I advocate it mainly as a means of life.

We are now in a critical period of transition in our history. In the Ceylon of a hundred years ago and earlier, the chief educational influence was the discipline of caste and religion often inextricably blended and which stood for settled obligation and unrelenting duty, not, as often now, for the assertion and grasping of rights. The training prescribed for the woman was through the duties of domestic life with its ideal of loving service and helpfulness to others. Book education played a very insignificant part in that system.

The old ideals, traditions and sanctions have disappeared, and nothing has yet taken their place as a system of national culture. The matter of immediate

and of supreme importance is to supply this defect and improve upon the old methods. This, many of us are convinced, can only be done by the development of higher education, by the diffusion of the best Western culture mingled with all that is best in our own, by a wise selection and happy mingling which will take due note of the unlikeness of the conditions which exist in this country to those which exist abroad. We must proceed somewhat on the lines which have proved so successful in Japan. We must as Japan did, develop our own soul, and not seek to borrow another. In course of time we shall have in the University a most powerful instrument for forming character, for giving us men and women, armed with reason, braced by knowledge, clothed with steadfastness and courage, and inspired by that public spirit and public virtue which are the brightest ornaments of the mind of man.

Few thinking men will deny that this is our greatest need at the present day. We have no leisured or cultured class. Professional success, money-making, a life of luxury and show, are too often our only goals. Culture, sweetness and light, for which Matthew Arnold pleaded all his life, are regarded as moonshine. We do not realize that the thing that matters most, both for happiness and duty, is that we

should strive habitually to live with wise thoughts and right feelings.

In a famous passage the Athenian statesman Pericles, describing the glory of the community of which he was the leader, said: "We, at Athens, are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes: we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness." May we not hope that under the beneficent influence of a University there will grow up an atmosphere of culture and loyalty to high ideals which will make it easier for our youth to strive for a life of manly simplicity and of duty well done as their goal?

It is the fashion in Ceylon to deride the Indian Universities. Let me give you one instance of what Indian graduates are doing. In Poona, a chief city of the Bombay Presidency and the ancient capital of the Maharattas, is a college called the Ferguson College established by Indian graduates for the supplying of higher education at a cost within the means of the poor student. The best students of the College bind themselves, on completing their course, to teach in the College on a bare pittance for fifteen years. Among these teachers are some of the most brilliant graduates of the Bombay University. One of them who was for long the mainstay of the College is Mr.Gokhale,

member of the Viceroy's Council whose recent tour in England as a delegate from India some of us have watched with intense interest and whose speeches have made deep impression on English audiences. Mr. Pranjyep, a Senior Wrangler of Cambridge, was a student of the College and is now serving his term there. He is the Principal, and receives a salary of about fifty rupees a month. There are similar colleges at Lahore and Calcutta, and some of the professors even work gratis. When we can produce one such instance of self-sacrificing devotion to high ideals and to Motherland, then it will be time for us to sit in judgment on the Indian Universities. I am convinced that our youth are capable of rising to the same height, and that there is among them a craving for culture, though the commercial view of learning is owing to bad influences temporarily in the ascendant.

To those who look on the question of higher education from the standpoint of "Will it pay?" I need only point to the countries, European and Asiatic, which by this means have raised the standard of ability and character and general efficiency throughout the public service and in every profession and branch of knowledge, and have raised themselves to a high state of prosperity. Only by the same means can the efficiency of our professions and public service be

raised, our Island's natural resources developed, and her prosperity increased and made secure. Here, if anywhere, as it has been truly said, is the occasion for applying the words of the wise man: "If the iron be blunt and a man do not whet the edge, then must he put forth more strength; but wisdom is profitable to direct."

It is because benefits of incalculable value, material, and moral, flow to a people from higher education that Mr. Chamberlain emphatically declared that "money spent on higher education is the best of all possible national investments," and it is, therefore, we have thought it necessary to start this movement.

It has been said that the movement is premature and that we shall not be ripe for a University for years. It may be that we are not ripe for a University at once, but the movement is not therefore premature. It is necessary to create and organise public opinion in favour of higher education and a University. When such opinion has been created and organized, then we can approach Government and try to convert them to our views. This has been the usual course elsewhere. For instance, the Calcutta University which was established in 1857 was not the spontaneous gift of Government. It was the result of years of preparation

and agitation on the part of patriots and enthusiasts. The brunt of this work was borne by an Association created in 1845 by Mr. C. H. Cameron, friend of the poet Tennyson and father of the late Treasurer of this Island, and at that time Law Member of the Viceroy's Council. To him, by the way, Ceylon owes a great debt, for it was he and his colleague Lieutenant Colonel Colebrooke, who in the early part of the last century, as Commissioners appointed for the purpose by the Secretary of State, drafted the present political and judicial constitution of the Island, in a most valuable and interesting report which may be read in the Appendix to Ramanathan's Law Reports, 1820-33. Just as Mr. Cameron and others by their indefatigable services paved the way for and made possible the creation of the Calcutta University, so others worked for the establishment of the Madras and Bombay Universities. In 1857, when the Madras University was created, it was with difficulty candidates were found for the Matriculation Examination. Ceylon was then so far ahead of Madras that students used to come to Jaffna to study for the Madras examinations, and the two first Madras graduates were Tamils of Ceylon. The establishment of a University has given such an impetus to education throughout the Presidency that it has left Ceylon miles behind.



In seeking, therefore, to form a Ceylon University Association we are not only following precedent but doing an indispensable work. We do not commit ourselves to the form the University is to take, to the details of its organization as to teaching, examinations, &c. Those are matters that must be developed later, and on which at present there cannot but be differences of opinion. Meanwhile, whatever scheme for higher education may be now before the public, whether in connexion with Cambridge, London or Madras, may be pursued without let or restraint. These schemes, it is generally felt, are transitional and require modification to suit our special needs. The aim of our Association will be to make this period of transition not long or fruitless, and to strive for the establishment of a University which will be the crown of a well-ordered series of elementary and secondary schools and colleges, which will systematize and concentrate the energies now dissipated in various institutions for general and professional education and which will render it impossible for our schools and colleges to go on in a drowsy and impotent routine, but will raise the culture of our people ever higher and higher by their means.

The Athenaeum,  
Pall Mall, S.W .

7th October, 1913.

Dear Mr. Harcourt,

I thank you for your kind letter and am greatly cheered by the thought that the subject of my letter is engaging your personal attention. I feel encouraged to submit for your favourable consideration one or two additional points in connection with higher education in Ceylon.

A scheme is being prepared for the establishment, at Peradeniya, of a well-equipped Agricultural College. It will supply a great want, and be fruitful of much good to Ceylon and to the tropical Colonies. Already the Island has an excellent Medical College, the Diplomas of which are recognized by the Medical Colleges of Great Britain. We have a Council of Legal Education which trains law students and admits them to both branches of the profession. The Council has large funds at its disposal but the instruction it gives to law students is not so efficient as it might be - scarcely an adequate return for the heavy fees it extracts; under proper direction it might easily be made efficient. There is a Government Training College for teachers doing excellent work. The new University for which I have been agitating for over 20 years will supply courses in Arts and Science and probably Commerce

which offers new careers to our youth. The Government Factory trains students in Engineering, and with the help of the Government Railway and other scientific departments might be developed at little expense into a good Engineering College.

Thus we have, or will soon have, more or less well-equipped Faculties in Arts, Science, Law, Medicine, Agriculture, Engineering, Commerce and Pedagogy - but all working independently one of another and involving much dissipation of energy and conflict of methods and none leading to a degree, to obtain which a student has at much expense to go abroad or in Arts to pass an examination held in Ceylon by foreign bodies (such as the London University) ignorant of local needs and conditions.

I submit that it will make for economy and efficiency to co-ordinate these various Faculties into a university which will be responsible for the organization and direction of higher and professional education and of the steps leading to it and will also confer degrees. Such co-ordination and organization require a first-class man with up-to-date knowledge and experience of educational methods and aims, such as Sir Charles Eliot whom the University of Hongkong has secured for its Principal, or Mr. H. A. L : Fisher, Vice-

Chancellor of Sheffield, with whom I have conferred and whom we may send out to help me in organizing the Ceylon University. With such a gentleman aided by good men as Professors, education in Ceylon could easily be placed on a sound footing - and Ceylon can afford to pay them liberally.

It is also my fervent hope that the modern and classical languages of Ceylon (Sinhalese and Tamil, Pali and Sanskrit) so long excluded from the secondary schools will take their proper place in the educational curriculum, and that a generation will soon grow up to supply one of our greatest needs, the creation of a modern literature in Sinhalese and Tamil, instinct with the best spirit of the West.

I am,  
Yours truly,  
P. ARUNACHALAM,

The Rt. Hon. L. Harcourt,  
Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Memorandum By Sir P. Arunachalam

(a). The study of the Sinhalese and Tamil languages in Elementary and Secondary English Schools is valuable from more than one point of view. In the first place, these languages being, like Latin and Greek, and even

more than they, synthetic languages, (i.e., the languages in which the relations between words are expressed mainly by inflections), afford an insight into word-building and the structure and growth of language. Such an insight is not to be gained from the study of English, which has lost most of its inflections, and indicates the relation between words mainly by the use of prepositions and auxiliary words and by changing the position of words. This is one reason for the value attached by educationists in England to the teaching of Latin and Greek. But in Ceylon we have already to hand the mother-tongues of our pupils to illustrate how words are built and language is formed, and it is unnecessary to teach strange, dead languages for the purpose. As for pupils whose mother tongue is not Sinhalese or Tamil, they usually speak one or the other, and would find it far easier to learn to read and write than Latin or Greek. Thus even if they do not reach the forms in which Latin or Greek is taught, they will, by study of Sinhalese or Tamil, have learned facts of educational value in the science of language.

Looking at the question from a merely utilitarian point of view, what profession or calling is there in Ceylon, the duties of which will not be more efficiently discharged with an accurate knowledge of Sinhalese and Tamil? In any other country than Ceylon it would

be deemed absurd for a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer, a merchant, to carry on his profession without a fair knowledge of the vernaculars of the people among whom he is working, and to depend on the help of interpreters. Such help is becoming more and more relied on, and less worthy of reliance, with the long-continued neglect of the vernaculars in our English schools.

In the majority of our Courts the official language being English, and unknown to the mass of suitors or witnesses, the administration of justice has to be carried on under conditions not conducive to its efficiency, affording opportunities for the freaks of the interpreter and to the witness in the box time to invent his answer, and almost nullifying a cross-examination. Whether in Court or the lawyer's chamber, the merchant's office, or the invalid's bedside, the decision of matters of vital importance is thus imperilled.

The policy of ignoring the pupil's mother-tongue is, moreover, educationally vicious, and impedes the due development of his mind. Think what it would be in England, if, say, German was made the medium of instruction in the elementary schools and English was entirely excluded from the curriculum. Yet German is more akin to English and easier to an English child

than English is to a Sinhalese or Tamil child. English children were subjected to such treatment for three centuries during the Norman period till the reign of Richard II, when French was displaced by English as the medium of instruction. The credit of initiating this great reform is attributed to John Cornewaille, a master of grammar, who "changed the lore in grammar schools and construing from French into English. So that now, (in 1385) in all the grammar schools of England children learned French, and construeth and learneth in English."

The root of the evil in Ceylon is that the vernacular was neglected. School education was attempted through the medium of English, a language not spoken in the homes of pupils, never as a language formally or effectively taught, but tacitly and wrongfully assumed to be known. Consequently school work to the great majority of the pupils had become a process, not of mental development, nor of upbuilding in knowledge of things, but of acquiring mere words and phrases instead of ideas. But until English was well understood by the pupils, it should not be used as a medium of instruction in subjects having an educational value of their own, or intended to develop the reasoning power of the pupils. By its use in such cases the greater part of the mental force of the pupil was expended, not

upon the subject matter of the lesson, but upon mastering the language in which it was being taught.

English itself, in spite of the time and labour spent on it, is so imperfectly taught in our schools that, after devoting over a dozen years over its study, many pupils are unable to write, or speak it: correctly, and the Director of Public Instruction complained not long ago that, out of over 200 candidates at the examination for the Government Clerical Service, only 17 had a rudimentary knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic. It is not surprising that they feel no interest in good English literature, but restrict their reading to the gossip of the daily paper and trashy novels and magazines, and that they remain strangers to Western culture, however much they may strive, by adopting the externals of European life, to be "civilized" in the Western fashion.

The few who have assimilated Western culture, and whose mission it should be to interpret the West to the East are disqualified for that great office. Having passed through a curriculum in which their mother tongue is proscribed, they have grown up in deplorable ignorance of it. There is thus no prospect of the greatest need of the country being supplied, viz., a good Sinhalese and Tamil literature, instinct with the



best spirit of modern Europe. Only by the creation and spread of such literature can what is good in European civilization be brought within the reach of the people, and become, as it has in Japan, part of their life and character, and contribute to the vigorous growth of national life. It has been truly said: "At all times, perhaps, the central point in any nation and that whence it is itself really swayed the most and whence it sways others, is its national literature, especially its archetypal poems... The great literature penetrates all, gives hue to all, shapes aggregates and individuals and, after subtle ways, with irresistible power, constructs, sustains, demolishes at will. Why tower, in reminiscence, above all the old nations of the earth two special lands, petty in themselves, yet inexpressibly gigantic, beautiful, columnar? Immortal Judah lives and Greece immortal lives in a couple of poems... The genius of Greece and all the sociology, personality, politics and religion of those wonderful states resided in their literature or aesthetics. What was afterwards the main support of European chivalry, the feudal, ecclesiastical, dynastic world,-forming its osseous structure, holding it together for hundreds, thousands of years, preserving its flesh and bloom giving it form, decision, rounding it out and so saturating it in the conscious and unconscious blood, breed, belief and

intuitions of men, that it still prevails powerfully to this day in defiance of the mighty changes of time,-was its literature permeating to the very marrow, especially that major part, its enchanting songs, ballads and poems. To the ostent of the senses and eyes, I know, the influences which stamp the world's history are wars, uprisings or downfalls of dynasties, changeful movements of trade, important inventions, navigations, military or civil Governments, advent of powerful personalities, conquerors, etc. These of course play their part; yet, it may be, a single new thought, imagination, principle, even literary style, fit for the time, put in shape by some great Literatus and projected among mankind, may duly cause changes, growths, removals, greater than the longest and bloodiest war or the most stupendous merely political, dynastic or commercial outturn.”

Not only are our English educated youths unfit to discharge this great mission, a gulf is growing between this class - ignorant of the vernacular and classical languages, of Ceylon, of its history, antiquities and traditions - and the masses of the people to whom English is and will remain a sealed book. They should be taught to understand their own history, not merely the names and dates and incidents, but the philosophy of all the happenings of all those many hundreds of

years of their history during which their race has been in formation ; they should learn to glory in the high "achievements of their race, to be proud of its traditions, of its history and vernacular, as becomes those who are born in the country, and they should know, above all, the people of the country ... The Ceylon boy must not forget in the flood of other learning this most important learning of all ; a thorough knowledge of his own country, its people, its history, and its language.

Tamil literature goes back at four thousand years. It had already reached a high standard of excellence at the beginning of the Christian era, and the Pandyan dynasty of Madura had established an academy of poets and savants, analogous to the Academie Francaise, to be the guardians of the language and literature. The three epochs of that academy are the landmarks of ancient Tamil history. Bishop Caldwell has said: "It is impossible for any European who has acquired a competent knowledge of Tamil to regard otherwise than with respect the intellectual capacity of a people among whom so wonderful an organ of thought has been developed"; Tamil literature was characterized by enthusiasm for Tamilic purity and literary independence, and it is the only vernacular literature in India which has not been

content with imitating Sanskrit, but has honourably attempted to emulate and outshine it. While Sanskrit is a dead language, spoken only by scholars, Tamil, which is so old that its words have passed into the Old Testament of the Hebrews, continues to be the vigorous living speech of forty millions of people. Yet thousands of Tamil children are turned out of our English schools as educated, who have lost all sense of the value of their mother-tongue, and are unable even to speak it correctly. Sinhalese would not, perhaps, be accorded so high a place among the world's languages and literatures, but it has a more special interest for Ceylon. Not only is it the speech of the majority of its inhabitants, but it enshrines the ancient culture and civilization and traditions dear to every Ceylonese. It is, therefore, right that our youth should be compelled to give some time to a systematic study of their mother-tongue, in order that they may be able to speak and write it with some degree of accuracy and facility, to keep in touch with the currents and ideals of the national life and civilization, and as they grow to manhood, may be fitted to rescue the vernacular literature of the day from its pedantry and triviality and make it a worthy vehicle for the dissemination of all that is best in Eastern and Western Culture.

## Appendix

### **Retrenchment Committee Report: Sir P.**

#### **Arunachalam's Continuity Of Policy**

Desperate attempts are being made to wreck the Reform Movement by reactionaries. One phase of this attempt is to throw doubt on the sincerity of the views expressed by the revered and respected Chairman of the Reform Conference (Sir P. Arunachalam) and to insinuate that they are the outcome of a craving for public applause. We have therefore great pleasure in

bringing to the attention of our readers (Daily News, 1917.) the following letter, written to the Government in the year 1894 by Sir P. Arunachalam, whilst still an official, in which he advocates

1. The great need, that existed even at that date for placing the Legislative Council on a more representative basis, on the lines of, at least, Mauritius. (At that date the Legislative Council of Mauritius was composed of ten unofficials elected on a territorial basis, nine nominated members and eight ex-officio members).

2. The need for the larger employment of Ceylonese in the services, the gradual relaxation of the Island from the clutches of "grandmotherly government" which hindered the growth of manliness and self-reliance, and

3. The necessity for a greater extension in Local Self-Government, and the need for elected Chairmen.

Mr. P. Arunachalam, M.A., C.C.S., to the Chairman.  
Retrenchment Committee.

Colombo, October 22, 1894.

Sir, - Referring to your letter of the 12th ultimo, I have the honour to annex a statement (A) showing the

reductions which I consider it practicable to make in the number of Government Agencies at present existing, and in other branches of the Public Service of the Island.

In submitting these proposals I have borne in mind (a) the reduction in the work of the Government Agents and their assistants consequent on the abolition of the grain tax which it was their main duty to collect; (b) the fact that their predecessors in office were able to administer even larger divisions not less efficiently and with not less satisfaction to the people they ruled; (c) the improved facilities of communication that now exist owing to the extension of railways and roads; and (d) the great advance made by the people during the last thirty years in education, in intelligent and grateful appreciation of the benefits of British Rule, and in the ability and desire to co-operate with British officers for the promotion of measures for the public good.

The present seems to me a favourable time for reducing the active interference and supervision of Government officials in the more advanced provinces and districts, for directing such activity mainly to districts where the ignorance, poverty or apathy of the inhabitants demands the close and watchful care of Government, and for utilising in the administration of

the former districts local talent and experience, not merely by the more extensive employment of Ceylonese officers, but especially by the expansion and development of the policy of local self-government inaugurated thirty years ago by Sir Hercules Robinson in the Municipal Councils Ordinance of 1865 and the Village Communities Ordinance of 1871, and by Sir William Gregory in the Local Boards Ordinance of 1876.

An extension of local self-government would relieve Government Agents and their assistants at once of an appreciable amount of work, and still more in the future. But even without such extension the exigencies of the Public Service will, I think, be sufficiently met by a reduced number of the officers. The idea of centralisation of administration has been developed in Ceylon so far, that it has checked the growth of self-reliance among the inhabitants. Throughout the greater part of the Island little is done by a private individual without invoking the aid of the Government Agent or his assistant, who gives or withholds it after inquiry through a succession of headmen - the Mudaliyar or Ratemahatmaya, Muhandiram or Korala, and minor headmen. This system has increased to a dangerous degree the power of headmen and their opportunity of abusing it, and has



retarded the progress of the people by reducing them to a state of helpless dependence.

This makes the Government Agent more keenly alive to the necessity of watching over these "Children" and protecting them from the oppressions of headmen and others. The evil goes on increasing in a circle. The Government Agent's very solicitude makes the people more and more helpless, and their helplessness throws more and more care and work upon him - a state of things best described by Sir William Harcourt's happy phrase "Grandmotherly Government."

It undoes much of the excellent work of British officers and defeats the policy of the British Government to educate the people to govern themselves and to make them a contented, self-reliant and vigorous unit in the British Empire. Many revenue officers, having spent the greater part of their lives in such administration as I have described, appear to have persuaded themselves that all the Ceylonese are alike unfit to manage their affairs.

Nothing, however, can be more striking than the contrast between the people so spoiled by the mistaken kindness of officials and the people who, having been brought into contact in, or near, the towns

with unofficial Englishmen in business and other transactions, have, even without an English book education, acquired the qualities of self-help and manliness, the development of which in Ceylon would be the greatest blessing that British Rule can confer. If the Government Agents and their Assistants were fewer, there would be less opportunity to keep the people in leading strings, and they would learn to be self-reliant and manly.

It is on this ground that I mainly rest my proposals for the slight re-arrangement of Provinces and Districts. I have deliberately abstained from more ambitious schemes as likely to imperil the chances of retrenchment as well as of a mitigation, which all interested in the welfare of the people should earnestly desire, of the evils of a too centralised administration.

## **Ceylonisation Of Service**

In the appointment of Ceylonese cadets, economy as well as efficiency can be secured by suspending for the present the local Civil Service Examination and appointing to such posts officers of the clerical service who have proved their worth, or young members of the legal profession. They would not have to learn

their work at the public expense as cadets now do and would be ready to assume at once and discharge efficiently the duties of Office Assistants and Police Magistrates. A large number of such persons being now available, there does not appear to be good reason for the present method of appointing youths fresh from school, after an examination in their school studies. Such an examination is unavoidable in regard to English youths selected in England, and is justified by the superior education they have received, and which should to some extent compensate for the want of local knowledge and experience. The tendency of the present system has been in fact to exclude the Ceylonese for whose benefit it was intended, and to admit Europeans not so well educated as the cadets selected in England, and who have failed in the more difficult examinations held in London.

### **Governor's Salary**

The pay of the Governor appears to be higher than the Colony can afford or the exigencies of the case require. The Governor of Madras, ruling over a population ten times that of Ceylon, is paid only Rs. 120,000 against Rs. 80,000 paid to the Governor of Ceylon. The salary might, on the occurrence of the next vacancy, be

reduced with advantage to Rs. 50,000 or at most to Rs. 60,000. I do not think it would result in the appointment of officers of an inferior stamp to that to which the colony has been accustomed. An official of such distinguished ability as Sir Cecil Smith was content to be Colonial Secretary here on Rs. 24,000 and to go on promotion as Governor to the Straits Settlements on about Rs. 57,000. There is little doubt that he would have been glad to be Governor of Ceylon on the pay I suggest. The reduction of the pay will secure as Governor one in the prime of life, able to move about the Island constantly, especially in the less advanced districts which most need Government help, and to impart vigour and tone to the permanent officials and local governing bodies. Under the present system he is generally an officer on the eve of retirement from the Service of the Imperial Government.

We have certainly been lucky in securing Governors vigorous in spite of age, but this luck cannot be always counted on. Nor is it right to expose them to the risks and discomforts of such a life.

## **Local Self-Government**

I am convinced that still greater efficiency as well as reduction in the cost of administration can be secured by the development of local self-government. This is a point which I would most earnestly press on the attention of the Retrenchment Committee and the Government. It was one of the guiding principles of the Marquess of Ripon's administration of India. No Viceroy did so much to extend local self-government and place it on a sound and firm basis in that country. His successors, proceeding on the lines he laid, have so developed it that the ever increasing charges on the public exchequer on account of the cost of mere administration have been checked, and India, which till his time was behind Ceylon in local self-government, has now left Ceylon far behind.

Municipalities have existed in the Island for thirty years, and Local Boards and Village Councils for nearly as long, but there has been little progress in self-government, if indeed there has not been retrogression. Hardly any addition to the number of these institutions has been made since the early years of their creation, and the institutions that exist are not less under official control than before. In the whole Island there are but three Municipalities, Colombo, Galle, Kandy, all established in 1865 and each presided over by an official Chairman, in whom the

administration of the Municipal affairs is vested, the unofficial members having no control whatever over him. The Municipality of Colombo has for its Chairman a special officer, whose pay of about Rs. 15,000 a year imposes a heavy charge on its funds. The Municipalities of Galle and Kandy are presided over by the Government Agents each of whom has to devote to the administration of his little provincial capital, time and energy which should be reserved for the poor, ignorant, or apathetic inhabitants of the remote parts of his province. The case of the Local Boards, of which there are about a dozen in the Island, is no better. The Assistant Agent, who is ex-officio Chairman, may be said to be the Local Board, the unofficial members being practically powerless. The town of Jaffna, which is second only to Colombo in population and intelligence, has not even a Local Board.

What a contrast to the numerous Municipalities scattered over the length and breadth of India, presided over by elected Chairmen and doing excellent work. If towns of the population and wealth of Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Madura, in the Madras Presidency, and which are in no way superior to the towns of Ceylon in intelligence and public spirit can be efficiently administered by elected Chairmen, why not

Colombo, Kandy and Galle? The Chairmanship would then be a post of honour for which every good citizen would try to qualify himself. I venture to think that some of our officials make too much of the petty jealousies and differences which exist here. They exist in every country (England included) and in Ceylon are far less serious than those prevailing in India. By promoting a habit of co-operation for the public good, local self-government is calculated to reduce these differences, which after all can do little harm, for there would always be reserved in the hands of the Governor the power, when the public interests demand It, of controlling and checking local bodies and vetoing their measures.

The liberal spirit in which local self-government has been established and worked in India under Lord Ripon's Scheme has, besides increasing the efficiency and reducing the cost of administration, had the excellent result of creating within a short period of ten years a responsible body of electors having the right to return unofficial members to the Legislative Councils of India.

## **Reform Of The Legislative Council**

Our own Legislative Council remains almost exactly as it was at its creation in 1833 - a body of nominees of the Governor, who is nowadays by no means to be envied in his endeavour to find a clue to the popular candidate amid the din and confusion of irresponsible meetings, newspaper correspondence and petitions. The Council is in fact a striking testimony to the palsied condition of institutions designed and established in the Island with the intention of promoting self-government. If the wise and generous policy of the Imperial Government had been steadily and carefully carried out during the half century, Ceylon might have been a field for the trial of measures of representative Government, which could not be safely tried in India by reason of its vaster, more difficult, and complicated problems of administration, and might have become a pattern for Indian administrators to follow. But ill-founded fear and suspicion have prevailed and Ceylon has been outstripped by India, and seems likely to remain in official leading strings for another half century, unless a vigorous effort is now made to carry out the policy of the Imperial Government.

I do not say that the system which I propose will at once work admirably. It will at least not work worse than the present system, and even if it does at first, it is



the only way that the people can be taught to manage their local affairs and to settle their disputes. I believe that in the greater part of the Island the people are ripe for it and that, when it has been some time in operation, it will not only greatly reduce the cost and increase the efficiency of the administration throughout the Island, but will facilitate the realisation of the benefits which Mr. Saunders hoped for and effect a great improvement in the material and moral condition of the people. Nothing can be sadder both in itself and in its consequences than the lack of occupation and amusement to the inhabitants of a village in Ceylon. Deprived of influence and interest in village affairs and of the opportunities of co-operating for the public good, reduced to a state of abject dependence on officials in whose appointment they have no voice, they devote to quarrel and litigation, drink, gambling and crime, their time and energies which might be usefully employed. My proposal if adopted, will give every villager a real interest and occupation in the affairs of his village and teach him habits of co-operation and self-reliance, and is in fact an attempt to revive, as far as is consistent with modern methods of administration, what was excellent in the ancient indigenous system of administration—every village or group of villages managing its affairs,

subject to intelligent and efficient control by the Officers of the Central Government, and becoming a vigorous and self-reliant unit in the administration of the Island.

In the course of a few years the foundation would be laid for an effective and much needed Reform of the Legislative Council on a representative basis such at least as the Island of Mauritius now enjoys; and which will, I believe, increase the happiness of the people and stability of British Rule. A glance at the following statement, comparing the condition of Ceylon in 1834, the year after the Council was created, and now is sufficient to show the progress which the Island has made in the interval, and that the institutions then considered appropriate are wholly inadequate to the altered conditions of the people.

Population	1, 167,700	3,176,471
Education:-		
Schools	1,105	3,876
Scholars	13,891	157,257
Revenue	Rs. 3, 779,520	Rs. 18,051,950
Expenditure	Rs. 3,348,350	Rs. 18,276, 108
Tonnage of Shipping entered & cleared	153,510	6,152,393
Imports	Rs. 3, 727,260	Rs. 72,340,662

Exports                      Rs. 1,458,340    Rs. 68,977,776

I am, &c.,

(Sgd.) P. ARUNACHALAM.

## **Government Policy and Public Opinion**

Colombo,  
11th March, 1913.

Dear Mr. Stubbs,

I regret that the "Morning Leader" has made a fuss about my vote in the Legislative Council on the 7th instant. But I know that the public greatly appreciate your detachment and liberality of view in allowing officials a free vote.

May I take the opportunity to say that I deprecate the attitude taken by Mr. Booth towards Ceylon public opinion? It is both unwise and inconsistent with the Secretary of State's policy.

The Secretary of State has frequently laid down that, when unofficial members of the Legislative Council are unanimous on local questions, it is the duty of the Ceylon Government to conform to their wishes; and this policy has been followed by successive Governors. See, for example, Sir Henry McCallum's despatch at page 10, paragraph 44, of Sessional Paper 2 of 1910,

and the Secretary of State's despatch at page 22, paragraph 9. See also Lord Crewe's observations in the House of Lords in February 1909 on official majorities in Crown Colonies. (Parliamentary Debates, Lords, 1909, Vol. I. p. 211). In this particular case the demand of the unofficials was practically unanimous. Every unofficial member supported it except one, the European Rural member. The European Urban member, who supported it, knew better than Mr. Rosling that a vast body of the thinking public of Ceylon took the liveliest interest in the question and felt that the Government proposals required scrutiny and amendment.

It is not enough that we senior officials have examined and approved of the proposals. We must satisfy the public that the proposals are good and equitable. Ceylon has long passed the stage when the people are prepared to accept a thing as good because officials say it is. It is a natural result of the progress of education under British rule. But the older generation of Civil Servants are blind to this change and wish to govern Ceylon as it was governed fifty years ago. Their disregard of Ceylonese public opinion is bound to cause friction in the administration, and appeals to the Secretary of State and the House of Commons, all of which are to be deplored.

Mr. Booth, while pleading for urgency, forgot that the subordinate officers for whom he claimed to speak were themselves keen in demanding a thorough examination of the scheme so far as it affected them, and that the sterling officers' scheme was open to the exception taken by Mr. Lyttleton to a similar scheme in 1905,- that it was proposed by the Senior Officers to benefit themselves (Sessional paper 51 of 1905, p. 45 p. 9). We should therefore court the fullest unofficial inquiry.

On that occasion the Secretary of State insisted that the scheme should receive the approval of the majority of the unofficial members of the Legislative Council "as, if it can be avoided, it would be obviously more desirable that the betterment of the official salaries should not be effected by the use of the official majority" (page 64, para 4).

That was a very reasonable order, and the spirit of it should govern the present case. But not only did Mr. Booth not accede to the request that all the Unofficials should be on the Committee, but he even objected to a few whom they selected being on it. No doubt the Rules and Orders or the Legislative Council give the Governor the sole power of nominating the members of a Select Committee. But that power is usually

exercised after the Colonial Secretary has consulted and ascertained the wishes of the Unofficial members, and the present was, for the reasons I have mentioned, eminently a case in which that course should have been followed.

I remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
P. ARUNACHALAM.

P.S.- Another matter which has been brought to my notice and is exciting keen resentment is the Order of the General Manager of the C. G. R. reserving separate lavatories for Europeans. Such a distinction was never made before. You should call for the papers referring to a similar distinction proposed by the P.C.M.O. in the General Hospital. Such an outcry was raised, that at my request Sir Henry McCallum cancelled it. Such invidious distinctions do not conduce to harmonious administration.

These matters seem petty, but that was a sage observation of Aristotle: "Political disturbances may arise out of small matters, but are not therefore about small matters".

The Honourable  
Mr. R. E. Stubbs.

Officer Administering the Government of Ceylon.

## **Riots and Martial Law, 1915**

Special Tribunal To Try Cases

Ponklar, Horton Place,  
Colombo, July 6th, 1915.

Dear Sir,

While all of us wish the punishment of the guilty to be both swift and stern, you are, I am sure, anxious to take every care that innocent persons are not victimized by unscrupulous informers and false witnesses. The military judges are undoubtedly doing their duty. But they are handicapped by being unaccustomed to the weighing and sifting of evidence and to the ways of Ceylon witnesses, and may, in spite of all their care, be misled with fatal consequences to innocent persons.

You are aware of the opposition raised mainly by the Conservative Peers in the House of Lords last February, when the Government proposed to bring civilian offenders under the jurisdiction of military judges. The Government undertook to amend the Act and restore to British citizens the right to trial by jury, an undertaking since carried out. I see from recent

mail papers that the Lord Chief Justice and two other Judges of the High Court tried, with a Jury, two persons and sentenced one to death and the other to penal servitude for life.

If such safeguards are necessary in England, how much more necessary in Ceylon! Here the military judges are not only inexperienced in sifting evidence, but have absolutely no experience of Ceylon witnesses, and have to rely mainly on the evidence of Moors, who, having undergone outrages at the hands of the Sinhalese, naturally wish to wreak vengeance on their oppressors and to have as many convicted as possible.

Punishments by Courts Martial are indeed unavoidable, in the midst of organised bloodshed and plunder or of attempts against the State. But I submit that the time has now come to follow the precedent, if not of the English Government, at least of the Indian Government, and to appoint a special Tribunal to try cases now dealt with by the Courts Martial. Such tribunals are at the present moment at work in the Punjab. The London Times of 5<sup>th</sup> June summarises the proceedings of a Special Tribunal at Lahore which tried eighty-one persons charged with the very serious offence of conspiracy to wage war against His Majesty and overthrow the Government by force.



The procedure does not, as might be supposed, involve delay. A Special Tribunal at Multan disposed of 2483 accused in two months. See the *Allahabad Pioneer* of 25<sup>th</sup> June, for a summary of the work of this Court, and also for an official report of the evidence and proceedings of such Court published from day to day.

Such a tribunal, carrying on its work under the safeguards associated with the British Administration of Justice, would command the fullest confidence, not only as to its impartiality and whole-hearted endeavour to ascertain the truth but also as to its ability to do so. It is this third qualification which here, as in other countries, a Court Martial is believed to lack. It is most important that a judgment should not only be right, but should be believed to be right. Absolute confidence in British justice is the glory and security of British Rule in the East, and is too valuable an asset to be endangered. Punish the guilty by all means, and as severely as you like, in their persons, property and life; but let it be after trial by judges trained in sifting the evidence of Ceylon witnesses.

[As a result of the representations made by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in this letter and in other ways some of the Sinhalese leaders who were being

detained in jail were released, and the rigours of Martial Law appreciably abated.]

I would, therefore, submit to Your Excellency the desirability of appointing a Special Tribunal consisting mainly or entirely of Judges of the Supreme Court for the trial of serious cases which cannot in the opinion of your advisers be tried in the ordinary Courts.

I remain,  
Yours truly,  
P. ARUNACHALAM

His Excellency Sir Robert Chalmers, K.C.B.

## **Hindu Revival**

The Chairman, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, for himself and the other gentlemen who had signed the notice convening the meeting, thanked those present for their attendance and explained the object of the meeting which, as stated in the notice, was to consider the question of establishing a Hindu *Asrama* in the Cinnamon Gardens. During the greater part of the last century and earlier the Hindus of Colombo had occupied Sea Street, Chekku Street and the vicinity, in what is now known as St. Paul's Ward, just as the Burghers had occupied the Pettah. But with the development of the city and the vast expansion of

commerce, business had invaded those parts and filled them with stores and shops and driven out all who cared at all for the amenities of life. The better class of Burghers had taken refuge in Bambalapitiya and Wellawatte, and the Hindus in the Cinnamon Gardens. While the Hindus were living in their old haunts, they, like the Burghers in the Pettah, had within convenient distance all the institutions that were part of their civilization and necessary to their spiritual and intellectual culture,- places of worship, meeting halls, schools, libraries, alms-houses &c. when the Burghers moved from the Pettah, they took care in the course of time to provide themselves with new institutions in place of those they had left behind, so that they might keep in touch with their civilization and traditions. But the Hindus of the Cinnamon Gardens, who have an older and more precious civilization and ideals and traditions which many of the best spirits of modern Europe regard as of enduring value to the world, have been scandalously indifferent to their heritage, and are fast becoming thoroughly denationalized and materialized. With few exceptions, they take no interest in the things of the spirit. They care neither for Eastern nor Western culture. They scarcely go to places of worship, as not being within easy distance, even though they have horse carriages

and motor cars ; they see little of their saints and pandits, the custodians of the national ideals and traditions, they have no time or inclination to study the Agamas and Upanishads or to practise their teaching; literature, music and art are perishing for lack of encouragement; their sacred language Sanskrit is nearly as unfamiliar to them as Hebrew or Chinese ; their mother tongue Tamil has become a jargon of English, Sinhalese and Portuguese. While the fathers are immersed in business and money-making, the children, brought up in ignorance of Eastern knowledge and culture and in selfish indulgence, ape the externals of Western civilization and delude themselves that they are educated and cultured persons because they can chatter volubly in English, eat and drink and dress as Europeans do.

It is no excuse for us that similar conditions prevail among other communities in Ceylon. Each must set its home in order. Unless immediate steps are taken to check the rot that has set in, the next ten years will see the leading Hindu families of Colombo dead to all Hindu feeling and sentiment, dead to all spiritual and intellectual life, and wiped out of existence as they deserve to be. It is because some of us feel this very strongly, and that the preservation of what is good in the Indian civilization and traditions among the well-

to-do Hindus, the natural leaders of the community, is of vital importance, that this movement has arisen which we have met this day to inaugurate.

The Asrama that it is proposed to establish is intended to be a centre of Hindu culture, a place where Hindus would meet frequently to cultivate, in association with scholars and men of spiritual experience, by conversations, lectures, classes, bhajanas &c. all that is best in our religion and philosophy, literature, music and art, to revive our traditions of simplicity of life, self-culture, self-restraint, loyalty to high ideals, and to maintain an atmosphere that will be an antidote to the poison of materialism that is sapping our life. While we shall conserve what is good in our past, we shall endeavour to remove the excrescences that have crept into our religion and social system and to harmonize them with the needs and conditions of the modern world. It is proposed in the first instance, and until a fund is raised for building and endowing the institution, to occupy a hired house in a convenient quarter. The building will be available for Hindu societies, such as the Vivekananda Sabha and Saiva Paripalana Sabha, which have done excellent work for years in the city and have no regular home at present. Branches of the Asrama may in course of time be established in other parts of the city and of the Island,

in order to strengthen and extend the influence of Hindu culture.

Frequently questions arise affecting the interests of Hindus, and there is nobody whose business it is to safeguard them, with the result that, compared with other religious communities, Hindus labour under serious disabilities. Take e.g., the Katirkamam pilgrimage, which alone is placed under rigorous restrictions, while the pilgrimages of other religions are absolutely free. In connection with such matters, to provide for the adequate supervision of the Katirkamam shrines (which are neglected and falling into ruin and their endowments robbed), to safeguard the health and comfort of the pilgrims, &c. I have reason to believe that if a responsible body charges itself with the sanitary arrangements at Katirkamam, the restrictions now imposed will be greatly relaxed. In the course of next year, when the University College comes into existence, Government proposes to erect hostels for the residence and board of students and to offer the management and maintenance to organized bodies willing to undertake it. This will give the Asrama the opportunity of providing for the needs of Hindu students, as the various Christian Churches will do for their students.

May Paramesvara bless and prosper this movement!

## **Address to Ceylon Tamil League**

I offer a hearty welcome to the members of the Ceylon Tamil League in General Meeting assembled today. This is the Second General Meeting since its inauguration. I am glad also to see many members of the general public. From the proceedings today they will be in a position to judge of the work the League has so far done and of its aims, and of the claims it has upon the public confidence.

There is no need for me to speak at length, as the Committee's Report sets forth fully the League's work and aims and ideals. The League was brought into existence by political necessity, but politics is not its *raison-d'etre*. It has far higher aims in view, namely, to keep alive and propagate those Tamil ideals which have through the ages made the Tamils what they are, to keep alive and propagate these precious ideals throughout Ceylon, Southern India and the Tamil Colonies, to promote the union and solidarity of Tamilakam, the Tamil Land. We desire to preserve our individuality as a people, make ourselves worthy of our inheritance and worthy members of the British Empire. We are not enamoured of that

Cosmopolitanism which would make of us "neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor red-herring."

That does not mean that we are to be selfish and work only for the interests of the Tamil Community. Who have done more for the welfare of all Ceylon than the Tamils? Who has fought more vigorously for the welfare of the Sinhalese? In the "Dark Days of 1915" when our Sinhalese brethren were in distress and helpless, who came to their rescue but the Tamils? That statue which was to be the grateful memorial of the help rendered, may (as proposed in some quarters) be flung into the sea. But the Tamils are not going to abandon the proud duty and privilege of service to all our brothers of every race and creed.

But we do object strongly to being bullied or terrorised, we object to being underdogs of anybody. We mean to make ourselves strong to defend ourselves and strong also to work for the common good. The Europeans with all the power and prestige, with the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, Planters Association, European Association, Ceylon Association, feel the necessity of improving their organizations. Much more should we. We cannot any longer afford to be apathetic.



The Jaffna Association and the Tamil Maha Jana Sabha have done most useful work in the Northern Province. There are small Tamil Associations scattered over the Island and admirably fitted to promote local patriotism and watch over local interests. With all these it will be our aim to work in friendly and hearty co-operation.

We wish also to co-operate with every other Community in the Island - European, Burgher, Sinhalese, Mohammedan, Indian, etc. We believe that such co-operation is the best and shortest road to our political advancement.

In order to further the objects of the League we shall work for the establishment of a daily paper in Colombo - a vital necessity. The Committee's proposals with regard to this will be laid before you. We shall also work to establish an Agency in London and a Club in Colombo.

All this requires heavy outlay of money for which I trust the Tamil Community, and specially its wealthier members here and in the F.M.S., will contribute liberally. But it requires also enthusiasm, perseverance, united effort, and these I believe will not be wanting. May God bless and prosper our efforts!

## Incidence of Taxation

No. 4, Victoria Street,  
London, S. W  
15th July, 1913.

Dear Sir Robert,

There is now an agitation in Ceylon for the abolition of the poll-tax, a tax payable by every able-bodied man except the Buddhist Priest or Immigrant Cooly. I have always thought it an inequitable tax, for it falls on the rich and the poor, and I have worked several years to abolish it. The rich are fortunate in Ceylon, for they pay nothing else except on luxuries. Some years ago a Commission was appointed to consider the subject of Incidence of Taxation, but it died without making a Report. Your financial knowledge will no doubt reveal to you gross anomalies and inequalities in the Ceylon System of Taxation. The most pressing Reform is the abolition or considerable reduction of the duty on salt, which is a Government Monopoly. Such a policy will be a great blessing to the poor and an encouragement to Agriculture for which salt is needed but not used owing to its cost.

The rich, who, as tea and rubber planters and in the professions make large incomes and the Companies which make and send out of the Colony huge profits remain untouched. There is no income tax or land tax. The richer classes only pay the poll-tax equally with the poorest peasant. I cannot help thinking that the abortive result of the Commission on Taxation was largely due to the influence of the Capitalist classes and to the inadequate realisation by the Commissioners of the miserable condition of the poor. The salt revenue is about a £100,000/- and it should not be difficult to replace it. For the history of The Salt Question vide Ceylon Manual, 1913, pp. 459 et seq. and Ordinance 6 of 1890.

Yours sincerely,  
P. ARUNACHALAM.

Sir Robert Chalmers, K.C.B.

### **Conference of Co-operative Societies**

*Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam delivered the following speech at the Conference of Co-operative Societies held at Peradeniya on 28th April, 1914]*

“Your Excellency and gentlemen, the conference at which we have assisted to-day and which sums up the result of many months’ of excellent work is one of very

great consequence to the people of this country, and, if followed up by systematic and strenuous work, will, in lasting fruit, outgrow far noisier schemes. The address which we have been privileged to hear, so rich in wise counsel and inspiration, are proof, if proof was wanted, that he is not here in the mere discharge of an official duty but is moved by a warm and profound interest in the extension of the Co-operative Movement which is of supreme importance to Ceylon. The value of his encouragement and support cannot be exaggerated and it remains for us, the people of Ceylon, to put our shoulders to the wheel and work vigorously for the success of the movement. All experience shows that, although Governments can do a great deal in agricultural co-operation, they can do so only on condition that they encourage and do not undermine self-help. There is every reason to believe that this movement will thrive in Ceylon and find willing and zealous workers. The instinct of association has been always firmly implanted in the minds of the people of India and Ceylon and may be said to be the basis of our social system, family, caste and village life. In Western countries individualism is the dominant note, and while it has given birth to a great expansion of material wealth, power and splendour, it has given rise also to evils which are well recognised and which

have engaged the earnest attention of statesmen and thinkers. Co-operation is one of the principal remedies urged and tried in Europe. Contact with Western civilization has no doubt weakened our old ideals and traditions but they are still sufficiently vigorous, and the spirit which underlies the co-operative movement is in harmony with them and will appeal to our people. Co-operation plays a very important part in our agricultural life. It is our good fortune that we are a nation of peasant proprietors, and that capitalists and big landowners are few and far between. Our nation, indeed, "lives in the cottage". In olden times a peasant taken from his work in the field and washed of his mud and dirt was deemed fit to sit on the throne of Lanka, but now the peasantry, dejected, depressed, despondent, not only lacks the comforts and necessaries of life, but even is devoid of mental and physical energy. Our educated men who ought to be their guides and leaders are engrossed in money making and frivolity and have little thought of our responsibilities to them. We claim to be educated on Western lines, but do we realize how passionately the idea of social service has taken possession of Western men and women? What pains do we take to understand and study the condition of our masses, to improve their lot and to share some of our advantages

with our less favoured countrymen? It may be said that a benevolent Government in its anxiety to promote the welfare of the country has centralised the administration, attempted the impossible task of doing everything for the people and has deadened individual effort and responsibility. This is no excuse for our apathy. However, a new era is dawning upon us. Here is a fruitful field in which our co-operation is invited by Government and is indispensable. If we respond to that invitation, immense benefits must accrue to our country. We shall develop the agricultural and industrial resources of our country and improve the material condition of the masses. We shall train them in habits of self-help and of working too ether "each for all and all for each". We shall educate them to be self-reliant and public-spirited citizens. We have only to look at countries like Denmark, Germany, Italy, and Ireland to see what striking progress in wealth and education is possible under the Co-operative system. I look forward with confidence to similar success in Ceylon. His Excellency the Governor, in giving the inestimable advantage of his patronage and support to the movement, has rendered to our people a signal service. I feel sure you will pass with acclamation the vote of thanks which I have much pleasure in submitting to you.

## Education in Ceylon

The contrast between the U.S.A. and Ceylon is striking, both in the actual conditions and in the aims of education. In the U.S.A., out of a population of 96 millions, 7.7 per cent. is illiterate (including the large Negro and immigrant population). In Ceylon as much as 73.6 per cent. is illiterate (females alone 98 per cent.); that is, the illiteracy is ten times great with a population 24 times smaller than the U.S.A. Compared with some Oriental countries, also, Ceylon scarcely makes a creditable show. Japan, with a population of 70 millions, has in 50 years absolutely wiped out illiteracy. Ceylon with a population of 4 millions, has not been able to reduce illiteracy appreciably after over a hundred years of British Rule. Elementary education is neither free nor compulsory in the greater part of the Island, and, where it is, the provision for it is insufficient. In the Capital City of Colombo it is wholly lacking for about 12,000 children, most of whom are wandering wild in the streets. During the last three years the Ceylon Social Service League has succeeded in bringing home to the authorities their responsibility, and two schools are in course of erection which will provide for perhaps 5 per cent. of the children.

Ceylon under its ancient kings had, like Burma, a system of primary education conducted by Buddhist monks in their pansal. Wijaya Bahu III, who ruled at Dambadeniya (circa 1240) “established a school in every village” says an ancient Chronicle, “and charged the priests who superintended the same to take nothing from the learners, promising that they should be rewarded for their trouble by himself; and thus every day infinite crowds of priests were daily at the King’s door, receiving rice and clothing for their trouble of teaching; for the higher order of priests who did not move from their temples, the King ordered their victuals and what they wanted to be sent; he also examined the progress made by the pupils, and according to their merit in learning, promised them that they should be made priests; and the most eminent among them he appointed to particular stations to preach. Having brought religion and learning to this flourishing state, the king exhorted all ranks to persevere in this manner, and thus greatly encouraged religion.” (Upham, Raja Ratnakari, p. 99). Custom required every male to spend part of his boyhood as an attendant at a Buddhist monastery, serving the monks, receiving instruction from them and qualifying for monastic life, even if he did not advance as far as the noviciate. In spite of the



disordered state into which the country was thrown during the long struggle with European invaders in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, education was fairly well maintained and was not less wide-spread than the British found it in Burma. The Ceylon Census Commissioner (1911) notes that in 1891 Burma showed a higher proportion of male literates than Ceylon in 1901, but has fallen off during the 20 years ending 1911. Mr. Denham thinks that it may be due to a higher standard of literacy being required by better educated enumerators. May it not be that education has declined for want of encouragement of pansala education by the authorities and from insufficiency of the existing schools (whether State or State-aided) to make up the loss?

In Ceylon it is not recognised, as in all civilised countries, and specially in Japan, the U.S.A., France and Scotland, that education is the root of national life and progress. The responsibility of the State for the public education has been largely shifted to private bodies and individuals ill-equipped for the discharge of this important duty, and, by diversity of aims and practice, introducing an atmosphere of competition unfavourable to the interests of education. The expenditure on education is less than 5 per cent. of the public revenue, against 13 per cent. in the Indian State

of Mysore (British India is not so fortunate), and 32 per cent. spent in the Philippines by the United States Government. In the U.S.A. itself the expenditure is 20 per cent. of the State revenue and 80 per cent. of the local taxation, in addition to vast sums contributed by wealthy persons who are numerous in that country. In Scotland, the best educated portion of the British Isles, education - elementary, secondary and higher - is so wide-spread and so well organised that one boy in four goes to the University. No wonder that, in every part of the Empire, Scotsmen hold a position quite out of proportion to their population. Education is not taken very seriously in England. The Bishop of Birmingham, speaking some time ago in the House of Lords, deplored the fact that Oxford and Cambridge were far too much merely plutocratic playgrounds. "The plain and present fact," said Mr. G. K. Chesterton, commenting on the Bishop's statement, "is that our upper classes regard the University as a lark." The English educational system, though it has failed to produce a high average of brain-power or knowledge, has succeeded in producing a high average of self-reliance initiative, judgment, manliness, patriotism, - qualities which have helped to build a great Empire and have been conspicuous among all ranks of the troops at the Front. The War has brought home to the

English people the deficiencies of their education on the intellectual side, and vigorous remedies have been proposed by Mr. Fisher, the new Minister of Education.

Our system of education, weak on the intellectual side, is still weaker on the moral. It certainly does not develop the qualities I have just mentioned. How can it, with the mother-tongue and the national history neglected in our schools, and our boys and girls growing up ignorant of the ideals, traditions and achievements of their race and, by dwelling exclusively on the achievements of others, hypnotised into self-depreciation and a sense of inferiority? No greater disaster can overtake a people. Mistral and his inspired brother-poets of Provence recognized that the soul and essence of a people lies in their language. "Forbid the tongue," says Gaston Paris, "and you almost kill the soul." "In virtue," says Mistral, "hold fast to thy historic tongue. In language there lies a mystery, a precious treasure ... Every year the nightingale renews its feathers, but he changes not his note." How different is the aim of the American school from that of Ceylon in regard to the pupil? "His education is saturated with patriotism, with the instinct to prize freedom, to know his own value." The Ceylon youth, both at school and in after-life, lives in an atmosphere of inferiority and

can never rise to the full height to which his manhood is capable of rising. How can we expect under this system to breed good citizens, manly, self-reliant, upright, well-informed, public-spirited?

This system is, in fact, alien to the best spirit of Great Britain, which is thus happily expressed by a British statesman : "There are some people who seem to believe that the only way in which a great Empire can be successfully maintained is by suppressing the various distinct elements of its component parts, - in fact, by running it as a huge machine in which each nation is to lose its individuality and to be brought under a common system of discipline and-drill. In my opinion, we are much more likely to break up an Empire than to maintain it by any such attempt. Lasting strength and loyalty are not to be secured by any attempt to force into one system, or to re-mould into one type, those special characteristics which are the outcome of a nation's history and other religious and social conditions, but rather by a full recognition of the fact the these very characteristics form an essential part of a nation's life and that, under wise guidance and under sympathetic treatment, they will enable her to provide her own contribution and to play her special part in the life of the Empire to which she belongs.

But we want a great deal more than this. The example of Japan should be followed. Industrially she was almost non-existent 50 years ago. Now she is a formidable competitor to Europe and America. The steps by which she achieved her success are well known. She made primary education free and compulsory, not merely in name, as in Ceylon but in fact and wiped out illiteracy among workmen and aristocrats alike. Numerous industrial, commercial and agricultural schools were opened in all parts of the country, so that youths should become skilled workers without having to go far from their homes to acquire the necessary knowledge. First class technical institutions were maintained in large centres to give advanced training. The Central Technological Institute at Tokyo, to which I have already referred is reputed to be better than any even in the U.S.A. or Germany, and is almost the envy of the world. Promising students were sent abroad by scores and hundreds to Europe and America to acquire theoretical and practical knowledge of engineering and various arts and crafts.

In the seventies when I was at Cambridge, I had as fellow students many Japanese youths, who have since risen to great distinction and contributed largely to their country's uplift. Many more went to France,

Germany and the U.S.A. economic bureaus were organized, where qualified foreigners trained Japanese to succeed in their positions in time. Factories were built or acquired by Government and often worked at a loss. Various industries were subsidised by the Government, and some of them are still. Noblemen vied with the middle classes to subscribe capital, borrow money from abroad, and build up great industries.

All this ingenuity, grit, enterprise and organization have enabled Japan to distance industrially all Asiatic nations and to compete with the best European nations. Unlike Ceylon, which sends her raw materials abroad to be finished and sent back and pays extravagant prices for them, Japan imports raw materials in abundance from abroad to feed her factories, mills and workshops, - wool from Australia, ores from India, cotton also from the U. S. A. and Egypt. She would scarcely have been able to maintain her trade but for her foresight in building up a splendid mercantile marine and shipyards to construct the largest ships.

Similar measures will be no less effective and fruitful here, and are imperatively needed. That increase of wealth and strength would be ours and at the service

of Great Britain! The present policy will only make Ceylon a helpless victim to economic exploitation by Japan, as hitherto by Western Nations. Our helpless and perilous position has been brought home more than ever to all of us and to Government during this War. The Government will, I trust, lose no time to think out and organize effective measures to develop the great industrial resources and capacities of Ceylon to her best advantage on the lines that have proved so successful in Japan.

The ignorance and poverty of our people are almost appalling. Malaria, which modern science has shown can be mastered, claims its victims throughout the Island by tens of thousands. Our Capital City is a nest of foul slums and the abode of tuberculosis, and plague has come to stay. The wealth of a nation, said Ruskin, is the health of its people. To this and all other wealth, moral and material, education is the sole path. We must deem it a sacred duty to bring to every child in the country the tools wherewith he may carve his way in life. We must provide the implements which even elementary education affords, and the opportunities of further self-improvement and progress. Secondary and higher education should not be the privilege of a few, but should be within the reach of all. We may not be able to reach the standard of

some states in the U.S.A., or of the British Colony of West Australia, and provide an absolutely free University education. But we must realize with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain that "money spent on higher education is the best of all possible national investments." Such an organization will be a powerful instrument for forming character, for breeding good citizens, for developing the natural resources of our Island and increasing her prosperity and welfare.

Primary education, inefficient and ill-organized, advances slowly and languidly in Ceylon. Secondary education is in a worse state, and higher education non-existent. The high-sounding name of Colleges assumed by our secondary schools hides the poverty of their equipment. Instruction in science and manual arts is generally crude and feeble, and vocational training wholly absent. The lack of a University, deplored but not remedied by successive Governors, stunts the education of the youth of the country and impedes the growth of culture. The University College, which was decided on ten years ago by Sir Henry McCallum and was to be the preparation for a University, is still in the future. Manufactures and industries, latent wealth of the country and an imperial asset, remain undeveloped. Neglected and wasted, too, is that industrial and artistic skill which is conspicuous



in the few arts and crafts that have survived, and which little more than a hundred years ago extorted the admiration of European nations by the production of “the best and handsomest artillery in the world” and “the finest firelocks”.\*

Compare with this the splendid record of the U.S.A. as disclosed by Mr. Kunz. See what Japan has done since 1863. The whole of her child-population of six and half millions, male and female, between 6 and 14 years, is under instruction in over 26,000 schools. For secondary and higher education there are 303 middle schools, 117 high girls’ schools, 78 normal schools, 5,685 special and technical schools, 3,128 other schools and 4 Universities. The Tokio University (says the English scientific journal *Nature*, envious of the opportunities enjoyed by Japanese students), which was a generation ago a high school, is now (July, 1915) a highly organised University where scientific research lives and thrives. It consists of six colleges- law, medicine, engineering, literature and science and agriculture- and employs close on 400 professors, assistant professors and lecturers. Among the science professors are included 4 in mathematics, 3 physics, 2

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\* De Couto (1597), Faria Y. Souza (1666), Pyrard de Laval (1679), Linschoten (1805) etc.

theoretical physics, 4 chemistry, 3 geology, 3 botany, 2 geology, 1 each in mineralogy, geography, seismology, anthropology. The Technological Institute in Tokyo is probably without a rival in the world.

What would our youth not give for a tithe of these opportunities? With such facilities, what might not be achieved for our country by a people with the intellectual keenness and inherited culture of the Ceylonese? Just before the War I had the opportunity of studying on the spot the educational system of France. At the Sorbonne, which is the name of the ancient and famous University of Paris, and which had over 17,000 students, including 3,384 foreigners, the best education in the world was given at a yearly cost to the pupil of £6, i.e., less than is paid in a secondary school such as the Royal College of Colombo. In the College de France, where advanced work and research in every branch of knowledge is conducted by Professors of worldwide reputation, the teaching is absolutely free. The facilities for study afforded to poor students in France were to me amazing. One winter evening I dropped in about 7 at one of the numerous public libraries in Paris, the Bibliotheque Ste. Genevieve, and found in the Reading-room about 100 students. Though I was a stranger without introductions, I was permitted to take my seat among

these readers and to call for any of the splendid books of reference and other works in all languages. I stayed there reading till 10 p.m. when the institution closed. I noticed that the students were for the most part exceedingly poor in ragged clothes and pinched with hunger. Apart from the books placed at their disposal, they must have appreciated keenly the light, warmth and comfort of the rooms on such a cold night. In the chief library of France, the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, reputed to be the richest library in the world the newspapers reported at the time that the authorities were faced with the invasion of the books by vermin introduced by the poor students. But there was no thought of excluding them on that account. In Ceylon there is not a single library of any value for rich or poor, and of course no free library.

In the intellectual famine from which we are suffering we are fast losing, if we have not already lost, that rich treasure of inherited culture which made our peasantry about the finest in the world. Robert Knox, after living 20 years among them as an unwilling guest of King Rajasinha, says (in his *Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon* 1681) that the ordinary ploughman had the elegant speech and the elegant manner of the courtier. Of what other people in the world could this be said? Wide-spread and deep-rooted must have

been the national culture, unlike the culture of modern nations, which seldom penetrates beneath the upper levels of society. Knox quotes with approval the peasants' saying: "Take a ploughman from the plough, wash off his dirt, and he is fit to rule a kingdom." What superb self-confidence! What height might not such a people attain under the leadership of statesmen moving with the times!

Regarded not merely as an instrument of national culture and for the production of good citizens, but even from a purely material point of view, education, and especially scientific and technical education, is of vital importance to us.

By a properly organized system of education, our resources could be immensely developed. This has been done in agriculture by a small country like Denmark, and in industry as well as agriculture by another small country, Switzerland. A Swiss statesman said: "Most of our children are born in poverty, but we take care that they shall not grow up in ignorance." The Agricultural College at Copenhagen receives a yearly grant, from the State of three and-a-half lakhs of rupees, and there are twenty-one agricultural schools for an agricultural population half that of Ceylon, to supply whose we needs have but one small school of

recent date, at Peradeniya. Switzerland and Denmark have by education so made up for the poverty of their natural resources, that their trade is greater per head than that of Great Britain, being respectively £23 4s. and £33 against £22 16s. for Great Britain.\*

There is, in my view, no more pressing need in Ceylon than the development of her industrial resources, a great store of wealth to her people and an imperial asset. Such development is impossible without scientific and technical education. Even in highly developed industrial states like England, such education on a great scale has been found absolutely necessary. How much more in Ceylon where new industries have to be created, decaying industries revived, the value of labour-saving machinery taught and the dearth of skilled workmen supplied! Technical education should not be confined to workmen and foremen. The conviction has been growing and been largely given effect to in Europe, America and Japan, that success in manufacturing industry, in the higher walks of commerce and in every pursuit requiring technical knowledge, depends very largely on the thorough training of those who are charged with the control of the different kinds of work

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\* Whitaker's Almanack, 1917, Page 107.

in which the army of operatives is engaged. These opportunities should be provided, in Ceylon by the State. Until they are provided, students should be trained abroad at the public expense, and on their return their knowledge and experience should be utilized for the public benefit in the scientific departments of Government, in scientific and technical schools as teachers in enterprises undertaken or aided by the State or wealthy individuals and bodies. It may be said that we have a Government Technical School in Colombo. The less said of it the better. It never had a fair chance and is now in a moribund state. I was recently a member of the Commission charged with the duty of inquiring into its condition and giving it, if possible, new life. Our recommendations, if carried out, will scarcely do more than make it a second-rate industrial school.

**Address At Lecture By Mr. Srinivasa  
Aiyangar: Sir P. Arunachalam On The  
Necessity For *Swaraj***

"I deem it a privilege to be here to-day to introduce Mr. Srinivasa Aiyangar to a Ceylon audience: He has kindly consented to give us an address on 'India's Fight for Swaraj,' a subject of great interest to us. He is an

eminent lawyer, the leader of the Madras Bar and held the office of Advocate-General. An Indian of such distinction is always sure of a welcome among us. But Mr. Srinivasa Aiyangar has higher claims on our regard and esteem. It is sometimes complained of the legal profession, whether in Ceylon, India, or England, that in spite of the commanding position they hold in the community, their outlook is often narrow and selfish, that they have few genuine interests outside the four corners of a brief, and when they take to politics do so mainly as a stepping-stone to a career or as a pastime of their leisure hours. Mahatma Gandhi, in India, accordingly deprecates the influence of lawyers and discourages their activity in politics. Now our friend is an exception and an example. He is a gentleman of wide culture, and has given signal proofs of public spirit and patriotism. He resigned the high office of Advocate-General and the prospects of further advancement in order to dedicate himself to the service of the Motherland. He is, therefore, peculiarly qualified to advise and guide us, and his advent among us at this juncture is our good fortune.

"The Ceylon Government has as the result of its mountainous labours brought forth a ridiculous mouse of in Legislative Council, which, no doubt, excites fond love and admiration in the maternal bosom but

elsewhere only an amused contempt. The Government has tried to emulate Mrs. Partington in her attempt to stem the rush of the ocean tide. But, as all history shows, nothing is so mighty and irresistible as ideas. This cannot be too strongly impressed on our youth who are sorely tempted to follow the track of their elders in the race for wealth and material success to the neglect of things of the mind. The barriers and delays set up by the Government to the Reform Movement have only served to give it an impetus. Some of us would fain have seen Swaraj on the banner of the Ceylon National Congress at its birth. We only acquiesced in the attenuated Congress programme in order to secure unanimity on an irreducible minimum demand. With the march and spread of ideas that programme has become quite out of date. The time has arrived to declare Swaraj our immediate goal and to work for it with enthusiasm and vigour, remembering that on us alone depends success or failure and that we are the sole masters of our fortune. The essence of Swaraj is complete popular control over legislation, taxation and administration.

"Good Government, it was well said by a British statesman is no substitute for self-government; nor is prosperity or any other worldly gain. We pride ourselves on our acquisition of Western culture and



assimilation of English habits and fashions. Long ago a great Roman historian, Tacitus, showed how a slave mentality was created in Britain by similar conditions under Roman rule. Agricola was a model Roman governor and provided a liberal education for the sons of the chiefs and showed such a preference for the natural powers of the Britons over the industry of the Gauls that they who lately disdained the tongue of Rome now coveted its eloquence. Hence, too, a liking sprang up for our style of dress and the toga became fashionable. Step by step they were led to things which dispose to vice, the lounge, the bath, the elegant banquet.' Mark the historian's words. 'All this in their ignorance they called Civilisation when it was but part of their servitude'. On the Romans themselves the evil effects of Caesarism, the counterpart of our Crown Colony Government, outlasted the lives of the bad Caesars and defeated the efforts of the good.

"The English historian, Sir John Seeley, whose teaching and personality were among the most inspiring influences of my time at Cambridge, records in his epoch-making work on the Expansion of England, the evil consequences of the Roman system to both rulers and ruled, pointing a moral to England and us. Here are two of his pregnant observations. 'Every historical student knows that the incubus of

Empire destroyed Liberty at Rome.' Again - 'Subjection for a long time to a foreign yoke is one of the most potent causes of national deterioration.' Swaraj is, therefore, of supreme and vital importance and should be secured without delay. Nothing else counts. Without Swaraj we cannot attain to the full measure of our manhood nor acquire that self-confidence and self-respect which are the foundation of national progress and success. It will be the fulfilment of the desire of His Majesty the King expressed in his Message of the 9th February last to the Imperial Legislature of India, and will help in the realisation of the conception of the British realm as a sisterhood of free nations, the only antidote to the poison of Imperialism which is eating into the vitals of England, of India and of Ceylon. I have great pleasure in asking Mr. Srinivasa Aiyangar to address you."

### **The Ceylon Workers' Federation**

A mass meeting for the purpose of forming a Workers' Federation in Ceylon was held on Saturday, February 9, 1920, in the afternoon at Tower Hall. The meeting was attended by a very large number of workmen, and by others who were in sympathy with the movement. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam presided and with him on the platform were Messrs.

D. B. Jayatilaka, G.A. Wille, A. Ramanathan, Martinus C. Perera, Peri Sundaram, P. de S. Kularatne, and J. Ratnasara.

Sir P. Arunachalam, opening the proceedings, said:"  
Gentlemen: It gives me much pleasure to see so large a gathering of workers' representatives of all branches of work. This meeting is evidence of the interest taken in the movement we have met here to organise and of the need you all feel for such an organisation. For some years past the friends of Labour have tried to help it by means of such institutions as the Ceylon Social Service and the Ceylon Workers' Welfare League. These bodies have done good work. They have exposed the evils to which labourers are subjected under our labour laws and the way in which they are administered. Labourers, specially on estates, are time after time sent to jail, - men, women and children - for breaches of contract, for quitting service, for alleged insolence, etc. We have succeeded in getting the law amended so as to secure exemption from imprisonment, at least for children and for women on their first conviction. Much remains to be done and we shall not be satisfied until all the penal provisions are wiped out of our labour legislation. We have also been working to secure better wages and better conditions of living and working, and

represented to Government and to employers the labourers' grievances. These are now well-known to the authorities and some relief has been obtained, and we hope to get much more before the new Labour Bill becomes law. I wish to impress on you that you must not depend so much on help from others but must depend mainly on yourselves, and for this purpose you must organise yourselves into Unions. It is only by organisation that you can be strong and win success. A dozen or a hundred men one by one are easily overcome. But if they join together and work together they are strong and difficult to overcome. The masses of our people have lost the habit of combining and working together and are become like children. They lack strength and self-reliance and are constantly calling for help from others. We want you to recover your ancient self-confidence and to learn to work together for your own welfare and the welfare of our motherland. Until you do this you can expect no real relief from the hardships under which you suffer. You want better wages, shorter hours of labour, liberal allowance of rest and recreation, good and cheap food, good houses to live in and facilities for making your complaints and obtaining inquiry and redress, education for your children, etc. These are some of the matters the Ceylon National Congress at its great

meeting in December pressed on Government. You may know that in Europe and America in former times labour was as weak and helpless as you are, but they have by union and education become very powerful. A few months ago at the great Peace Conference they made their voices heard and a great organisation has now been created consisting- of representatives of Government and of Labour from all nations in order to look after the welfare of the labourers all over the world. The Ceylon National Congress demanded that our labour laws and conditions should be so improved as to conform to the requirements of the Peace Conference. Our object today is to create such an organisation as will enable you both to protect your interests in this Island and to secure representation on this great World-Board. By yourselves you will be weak, but when you have the help of this Board no individual, no Company or Corporation, no Government can prevent your obtaining justice and satisfaction of all your reasonable demands. We propose to form today a Federation of Ceylon Workers which will have branches in all departments of work and in all parts of the Island. It will not be confined to manual labourers, but will include other classes now equally helpless and suffering, such as clerks, shop assistants, conductors, etc., in town and

country, in factories and estates. The object will be to protect the interests of all workers and promote their welfare, to improve their social and industrial condition and to promote their moral and material development. But it is in no sense antagonistic to the good employer and capitalist and will do its best to work in harmony with them. It is proposed today to appoint Office-bearers and an Executive Committee. On this Committee, branch associations will be represented by delegates. You should make haste to form such associations everywhere and to send delegates. Even if you make mistakes, it would not matter much. It is the only way to learn to manage your own affairs. You must give up the idea that you are children; you must believe in yourselves and each other and work for each other's welfare. The Executive Committee will consider and discuss your grievances and try to get you relief as far as possible from Government and private employers. We would ask Government to form Conciliation Boards; to inquire into disputes between employees and employers and to settle the disputes on reasonable terms. It is only when all other means fail, and when you have a just cause and are sure that you can support yourselves during a strike that a strike should be undertaken. As there is grave unrest all over the world and conflicts

between workers and employers are not unlikely to occur, we propose to ask Government to appoint a Special Labour Department with a sympathetic Commissioner of Labour and an Advisory Board on which workers and employers will be represented, so that all labour questions may be carefully examined and dealt with. Such a Department with Advisory Boards and Conciliation Boards is about to be established by the Madras Government and we should follow suit without delay. But above all things it is necessary that you should form associations to strengthen and support the Federation. This is a great day in the history of Ceylon and I deem it a great privilege to be associated with the inauguration of this movement, and I pray that it may bear lasting and blessed fruit to the people of Ceylon."

[As a result of Sir Arunachalam's incessant labours, not only were the Penal Clauses in the Labour Ordinance repealed, but all the reforms he advocated in the foregoing speech to better the condition of the down-trodden labourers, e.g., Conciliation Boards, Minimum Wage, Workmen's Compensation, a Labour Department, and Advisory Board, etc. have been realised.

Vide Lord Crewe's tribute on p. 243 and reference to Sir P. Arunachalam's work in this connection in Parliament in the debate in the Commons on 14th July, 1921. Vide page 244 supra.]