



The
Child in the
Plantations

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THE CHILD IN THE PLANTATIONS

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PREFACE

In the International Year of the Child, the Church that has, following her Lord, been always concerned with the child, the family and the home, has a responsibility to draw the attention of all concerned to the problems of the child, so that these problems may be overcome with all the resources available.

These problems concern the urban child, the rural child and the child in the plantations. And all these deserve our urgent attention.

The problems of the urban child are often publicized in the mass-media. The problems of the rural child need to be far more widely known than they are now—and it is our hope that some of these problems will be examined in another publication in this study series.

The present publication deals specifically with the child in the Plantations—a sector in which also there is need for continued interest until the basic needs of such children are adequately met.

I commend this book to all interested in this important subject and trust it will arouse much interest leading to action by all those who are in a position to help.

✠ Swithin Colombo
Bishop of Colombo

Bishop's House,
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FOREWORD

At a time when there is world-wide concern for the welfare of children, and especially for those who suffer from various disabilities, we owe a debt of gratitude to Mr George Gnanamuttu, a former Assistant Commissioner of Labour and until recently the Secretary of the Development Commission of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, for writing this informative study pamphlet.

As a result of suggestions made to him by the Committee for Social Study and Action of the Diocese of Colombo of the Church of Ceylon some time ago, he wrote a book on 'Education and the Indian Plantation Worker in Sri Lanka'. This valuable work was published by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka and is already out of print.

The author's concern in the present pamphlet is not to give a summary of what is in the book, but to create interest on one aspect of his earlier study which has very serious implications not only for our national welfare, but also for our international prestige. For, in the eyes of the nation and of the world, it does not seem to be good enough for us who are citizens of our country to leave such urgent problems as those of the children of our plantations overlooked or postponed any longer. They affect both the present and the future of our nation.

In the context of our national unity and in the spirit of a truly righteous society and the norms which our Government has accepted as Guiding Principles, if there is enough sincerity and goodwill in our land, there is no doubt that we shall solve such problems as this which beset our nation today. All citizens of this land, and indeed all those from every land who love it, have a responsibility to do what is urgently needed without further delay.

It is because we need to know the facts before we act that we commend this book to all who respect human personality and especially the children of our land.

Celestine Fernando
Chairman
Committee for Social Study and
Action
Church of Ceylon
(Diocese of Colombo)

July 1979.

1. INTRODUCTORY

Aim of the study The aim of the present study is to examine the educational disabilities of a group of children belonging to a vital sector of our population, analyse, if possible, the causes of these disabilities and suggest solutions to overcome them. The scope of this study will be confined to the problems faced by the children of plantation workers of Indian origin, who comprise over 90 per cent of the resident children on the estates.

Arrival of Indian plantation labour The origins of the estate Tamil community date from the immigration that began during the third decade of the nineteenth century, with the large scale cultivation of coffee as a commercial crop. There was at that time no landless proletariat in the Kandyan areas (where the first coffee plantations were established) from which the planters could draw the cheap and regular supply of labour that was necessary for a growing enterprise. For this they had to look no further than the poverty-stricken and famine-prone districts of neighbouring South India, where a landless peasantry, dependent for its very existence on the bounty of the landlord and the vagaries of the elements, was prepared to undergo any hardship in order to keep body and soul together. This source they were not slow to exploit.¹

These workers came in their 'gangs' under their *kanganies* during the coffee picking season in mid-October, and returned to their villages in South India in time for the harvest and for such festivals as *Thai Pongal*³ and *Thai Poosam*⁴, which are celebrated in January. During the early 'coffee days' large numbers of these workers, mostly men, walked their way from their villages to Rameshwaram, sailed across the Palk Strait in vessels that were hardly seaworthy, and again made the journey on foot through the treacherous jungles that lay between Talaimannar and Matale. Thousands perished on the way. Of those who survived the long and arduous trek many arrived on their estates so weak and exhausted that they died soon after of various illnesses or succumbed to the harsh and exacting demands of work in an unfamiliar climate.

1 Jayawardena, Visakha Kumari. *The rise of the labour movement in Ceylon*, North Carolina, 1972, p. 16.

2. Labour foremen. Originally they brought with them their own labour.

3 A harvest festival of 2 to 4 days commencing on the first day of the Tamil month of *Thai* (January-February).

4. An essentially religious festival that falls on the full moon day of the month of *Thai*, devoted to the worship of Lord Subramania, the war God and son of Shiva.

Stability came with improved travel and living conditions and with the change-over to tea, a perennial plant which required for its cultivation and for the manufacture of its product large numbers of resident workers. Women and children, not only proved to be deft pluckers, but also cost the management very much less than the men in wages. Workers were recruited in family groups, and with them came their tutelary deities, their *poosaries* or priests, their medicine-men, their singers of ballads and those who were learned in their rituals and folk ways. And in the course of time each estate took on the character of a little village, practising its own customs and worshipping its own Gods. Today these people are settled chiefly in the Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa Provinces, and in parts of the Western and Southern Provinces.

Resentment and reaction The resentment against the presence of a large number of persons of Indian origin in this country may be said to have manifested itself in various ways from the time of the grant of 'Responsible Government' in 1931, by which time the Indian estate population was nearly 700,000. The grant of universal adult franchise enabled them to return 7 persons of their community from predominantly Kandyan electorates to the first Parliament of independent Ceylon in 1948. In the same year the entire community was disenfranchised, although a motion to restrict immigration initiated by a Marxist leader in 1937 had been rejected by a predominantly Ceylonese legislature.⁵ Those who could not qualify for Sri Lankan citizenship under the citizenship laws of 1948 and 1949 but chose to remain in Sri Lanka were categorised as 'stateless'.

The Indo-Ceylon Agreements

At the time of the signing of the Sirima-Shastri Agreement in 1964 about 135,000 persons of recent Indian origin had obtained Sri Lankan citizenship, and 975,000 were still 'stateless'. According to this agreement and the Sirima-Indira Agreement of 1974, 375,000 persons of Indian origin (with their natural increase) were to be given Sri Lankan citizenship, and 600,000 (with their natural increase) become citizens of India over a period of years.

The population of the estate sector was 1,161,611 at the Census of 1971 out of the Island's total population of 12,711,143. Of this number 951,785 were categorised as Indian Tamils, 6,610 as Indian Moors, 71,191 as Ceylon Tamils, and 6,402 as Ceylon Moors. The total number of Sinhalese on estates was 122,566 (71,626 Low Country and 50,940 Kandyan). Of those covered by the above-mentioned

Agreements, 316,294 'accountable persons' and their natural increase of 90,869 had been granted Indian citizenship, 239,481 'accountable persons' and their natural increase of 67,186 had left for India by 30-11-78; 136,844 'accountable persons' and their natural increase of 36,963 had been granted Sri Lankan citizenship.⁶ It will thus be seen that the processes contemplated by these agreements will take several years to complete.

The problem of education Our concern in this study is with the education of the children of the entire community including those of the currently stateless applicants for Indian citizenship while they are in this country.

Sri Lanka boasts of one of the best educational services in Asia. We do not appear to see the contradiction between such a claim and the denial of a proper education or even the denial of schooling altogether to the children of over a million persons living in this land.

According to the Socio-Economic Survey of 1969/70 carried out by the Department of Census and Statistics, the percentage of those without schooling on estates was 38.9 as against 11.4 in the urban sector and 15.8 in the rural sector. Only 8.8 persons reached middle school as against 37.9 and 31.7 per cent respectively in the urban and rural sectors. Hardly any child of a manual worker enters a University. The women on the estates are as a group the most illiterate in the country, 51.8 per cent of them not being able to read or write. The corresponding figures for the urban and rural sectors are 15.7 and 21.2 respectively. (See Socio-Economic Survey of 1969/70, p. 8, Table 9).

2. EDUCATION OF ESTATE CHILDREN—PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

The State took little or no interest in the education of these children during the nineteenth century. This responsibility had, therefore, to be undertaken by private agencies, religious and secular.

The kanganies

The first educators on estates were the *kanganies* of the gang, who ran what were later to be called 'lines schools'. These 'schools' were of two types—one for the rank and file, with its syllabus confined to reading and the learning by rote of the popular stanzas embodying the traditional morality of the Tamils, and the other for the sons and daughters of *kanganies* and members of the subordinate staff, providing a more

5. *Hansard* (State Council) 31-8-37, col. 2174; 3-9-37, cols. 2364-2369 and 2419-2421.

6. Information furnished by the Ceylon Workers' Congress.

varied curriculum. Thus were the children of manual workers conditioned at a tender age to accept discriminatory treatment as being natural to their station. There was, however, an attempt to provide for the continuation of familiar patterns of culture and make life on estates bearable for both child and adult by the teaching of dances like the *kummi*⁷ (for girls) and the *kolattam*⁸ (for boys), the staging of folk plays and the recital of the *puranas* (ancient tales). It is significant that in 1904 there were reported to be 179 schools held in 'coolies' lines' and 120 in buildings provided by the employer, while the total number of government and 'aided' schools was only 60⁹.

Religious organisations The agencies that contributed most to the formal education of the children of estate workers during the nineteenth century were the *Christian missions*. Of these the *Anglicans* were the most effective with their Tamil Cooly Mission (now called the Tamil Church Mission) which during a period of 100 years established or managed nearly 400 schools on estates. The missionaries ran two types of schools for the children of estate employees, one for the children of the manual workers, which later came to be called 'estate schools' providing a rudimentary type of education, which amounted to little more than the 3 R's, and another for the sons and daughters of the members of the subordinate staff, viz. tea-makers, clerks and conductors, which provided a more complete syllabus.

Two early examples of the latter type were the Borella Girls' and Boys' Boarding Schools, founded in 1867 and 1875 respectively, in order to 'provide higher education for Christian children from Up-country districts'. The former was amalgamated with Mowbray College, Kandy, and the latter with Christian College, Kotte, soon after their dissolution in 1923. Mowbray continues to serve the daughters of the members of the subordinate staffs on estates as a residential fee-levying school, while Christian College, Kotte, now called Sri Jayawardenapura Mahavidyalaya, has been run as a state school since 1961. By this time, however, the Christian missions had made their contribution to education through the schools, big and small, they established in the planting districts. Examples of such schools established by the Anglicans are Uva College, Badulla, St Andrew's College, Nawalapitiya, Christ Church College, Wattegama, and Trinity College, Kandy. Those run by the *Methodists* include Kingswood College, Kandy, Highlands, Hatton, and the Badulla High

School for Girls. The best known of the schools in these areas founded by the *Baptists* are Ferguson High School, Ratnapura, and the BMS Girls' School, Matale.

The *Roman Catholics* did not build schools on estates, but made their contribution to the education of estate employees through the schools they built in the towns in the planting districts. Examples of these are St John Bosco's, Hatton, St Bede's College, Badulla, St Sylvester's College, Kandy, and girls' schools like St Ursula's Convent, Badulla, and St Gabriel's Convent, Hatton. Today Roman Catholic priests and nuns are engaged in a social and religious ministry among plantation workers. The Roman Catholic Church also works through organisations like the Socio-Economic Training Institute, Kandy (SETIK), and the Technical Training Institute attached to St Anthony's Church, Dehiowita, in addition to a number of smaller institutions run by the incumbents of the churches in the various towns.

The *Seventh Day Adventist Mission* runs a residential, fee-levying school at Lakpahana, Mylapitiya, a few miles from Kandy, which provides in its curriculum practical education in the two national languages. Though this school gives scholarships to poor children, it is beyond the means of most plantation workers and those of similar income groups. More technical training schools within easier reach of the incomes of plantation workers and others of a similar category are a great need.

The *Buddhists* and *Hindus* made an active contribution towards the education of the children of the plantation workers from about the end of the nineteenth century. Buddhist schools readily admitted these children and showed no discrimination whatsoever against them. Tamils too served with acceptance on the staffs of these schools or even as principals. Examples of such schools are Sri Pada College, Hatton, Dharmaduta College, Badulla, and Dharmarajah College, Kandy.

Hindu schools were started by Young Men's Hindu Associations or the *Saiva Paripalana Sabhai* (Society for the preservation of Saivism), composed chiefly of government servants and professional and business men, some of whom made very lavish contributions to these institutions. Examples of these schools are Kathiresan College, Nawalapitiya, Saraswathy Vidyalayam, Badulla, and Pakia Vidyalayam, Matale.

Voluntary bodies Private, fee-levying schools too appear to have been in existence in the planting districts from the nineteenth century. There are a few even today, like Asoka Vidyalaya, Kandy, and smaller institutions like Mahinda College, Uduwara, and the Moorthy Institute, Ballekatuwa, a few miles from Namunukula.

7 Dance with clapping of hands and singing, especially among girls.

8 A children's game in which they sing and dance in a ring, marking time with beats of short coloured sticks.

9 *Report of the Commission on Elementary Education in Ceylon*. Sessional Paper XXVIII of 1905, p. 11.

Comment

The secondary schools in the planting districts catered to a wide variety of income groups both on the estates and in the towns. While superintendents and members of the subordinate staffs and even *kanganies* sent their sons to Trinity College and St Anthony's College, Kandy, and their daughters to Mowbray or to Girls' High School, Kandy, the middle income groups generally patronised schools like Uva College and the Badulla High School for Girls. Children of the manual workers on estates attended the smaller schools, many of them walking several miles to do so. This happened in increasing measure after the introduction of free education and instruction in the mother tongue.

The criticism has been made, not without some justification, that these schools helped to perpetuate the social divisions that characterised the hierarchical structure of the estate. But there were other factors too at work. The fact that a *kangany's* son became the head prefect of the school, or captained a team, or was even considered fit to be employed as adviser to the Estate Employers' Federation had in it more than a touch of humour. These schools also produced the priests, teachers and trade union leaders who later served in plantation areas. They helped to cut across the barriers of sex, caste and race and contributed greatly towards national integration. Education and social mobility were gradually coming within the reach of the children of tea pluckers and of those of other similarly disadvantaged groups. The tragedy that befell one section of these children will be dealt with later on in this paper.

3. EDUCATION OF ESTATE CHILDREN—STATE INTERVENTION

Early years

Government's policy during the nineteenth century was not to interfere with estate education, but only to provide a grant for the running of estate schools. It is also on record that an inspector was appointed in 1900 to supervise Tamil schools (including estate schools) in the Kandy District and in the Southern Province.

When in 1904 the question of making specific provisions for the education of the children of immigrant Tamil workers was taken up, S. M. Burrows, who had been Director of Public Instruction, was commissioned by Governor Blake to examine the existing facilities and make his recommendations. He saw no need for any more action than that the 'lines schools' be encouraged, for all the education the 'Tamil cooly' required was one that would enable him 'to sign his name, recognise signatures, read and write simple sentences in his

mother tongue, and do such arithmetic as is implied in the very simple accounts that come into his daily life, e.g. his pay and daily expenses'. Blake endorsed this recommendation and added that 'any other system would be both entirely unsuitable for their existing circumstances and unduly costly both for the Government and to the planter'.¹⁰

Nevertheless, *Ordinance No. 8 of 1907*, also called the Rural Schools Ordinance, made it obligatory for the superintendent of an estate 'to provide for the vernacular education of children of labourers between the ages of 6 and 10, and to set apart and keep in repair a suitable line room'. It was found necessary in 1920 to require by law the appointment of 'competent teachers' as it had been brought to the notice of the legislators that those who had been entrusted with the education of the young were sometimes the *kanganies* of the gang. The employment before 10-00 a.m. of children *between the ages of 6 and 10* was also forbidden, and parents were required on pain of fine or imprisonment to see that their children attended school. (Emphasis added).

After 'Responsible Government'

The grant of 'responsible government' and of universal franchise in 1931 was followed by a spate of progressive welfare legislation, and C.W.W. Kannangara, the first Sri Lankan Minister of Education, introduced into the *Education Ordinance, No. 13 of 1939* provision for the Director of Education to vary and broaden the type of education imparted in estate schools and to introduce the teaching of languages other than the 'vernacular'; but the latter failed to make use of the powers given to him. The *Special Committee on Education* referred to also as the Kannangara Committee, (Sessional Paper XXIV of 1943) did not discuss the problems of estate schools, but in 1944 the State Council passed without division a motion initiated by S. P. Vythilingam 'that all estate schools be converted into state primary schools and form part of the system of national education'.

In order to carry out this decision the Minister introduced into *Ordinance No. 46 of 1947* provisions to compel owners of estates on which there were more than 27 children between the ages of 5 and 16 and whose parents were resident on the estate to set apart on it premises consisting of:

- (a) a building which conformed to certain prescribed standards,
- (b) a habitable house for a married teacher, and
- (c) uncultivated land (not less than an acre in extent) to be used partly as a playground and partly as a school garden.

10. *Papers relating to the education of immigrant Tamil cooly children employed on estates.* Sessional Paper IV of 1905.

The Ordinance also gave the Director of Education authority to put up the necessary buildings and charge the cost of doing so to the management of the estate if the owner failed to carry out his obligations under the law in this regard.

The Minister had hoped by this means to pave the way for the gradual take-over and management of estate schools by the Government.

After Independence Kannangara failed to be elected to Parliament in 1948, and as stated earlier, this first Parliament of independent Ceylon disenfranchised the Indian plantation worker. Nevertheless, 24 estate schools were taken over by the Government during the next few years, the Education Ordinance was amended by *Ordinance No. 51 of 1951* to enable the State to impose very heavy penalties on employers who failed to provide the land and the buildings required by the law, and a phased programme for the take-over of the remaining schools was announced.

The planters protested against the proposed scheme on the ground that its implementation would throw a heavy burden on the plantation industry, and were, moreover, convinced that it would involve 'a never-ceasing drain on Ceylon's fast dwindling coffers'. The Minister of Education, who received a deputation from their Association, not only abandoned the scheme, but appears to have taken no action regarding the 63 schools they had been prepared to hand over 'which already conformed to the requirements of the law'. Subsequent legislation continued to ignore estate schools, though commissions of inquiry recommended that they be taken over by the State, and promises continued to be made in Parliament whenever the question was raised.

4. THE POSITION TODAY—PRE - SCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

Pre-school education The *crèche* on most estates is a bare, cheerless room and is in the charge of a female pensioner, whose main duty is to rock to sleep babies cradled in *sarees* slung from the roof. She also looks after a few children not old enough to attend school, to whom it serves as nothing more than a prison. Attempts have been made by trade unions, such as the Ceylon Workers' Congress, and voluntary organisations like *Sarvodaya*¹¹ to train educated girls from estates in child care, but hardly

11. Its full title is *Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya* (Organisation for the national harnessing of the goodness of all for awakening or liberation in Sri Lanka). Founded in 1958, it works through specially trained volunteers.

any of them have received employment on estates taken over by Government. Over two hundred *crèches* on estates managed by the Janata Estates Development Board and the State Plantations Corporation were renovated with assistance obtained from UNICEF and equipped with electric lights, water service, toys and pictures. *Crèche* attendants were trained and put in charge of these *crèches*, but they have been of little use as they do not speak the language of the children and of their mothers and are chary of handling 'coolie' children, which task is still carried out by the old pensioner or by daily-paid female labourers employed for this purpose.

Primary schools

It is reported that since 1948 no schools were started on estates. In that year there were, according to the Administration Report of the Director of Education, 968 estate schools with an attendance of 51,431 pupils out of 88,475 children of school age. In 1955 the number of estate schools was 891 and the number attending them 67,110, while the number of children of school age (which then was 5 to 14) had risen to 118,856. By 1972 the number of schools had dropped to 779 (771 Tamil and 8 Sinhala). According to the *Report of the Commission on Agency Houses and Brokering Firms* (Sessional Paper XII of 1974) about 100,000 children on estates were, at the time of writing the report, without schooling. In 1977 the total number attending schools had dropped to 46,721 (*Schools Census*, Ministry of Education). The sharp decline in the number of schools and in school attendance in the more recent years could be due in part to the repatriation of persons of Indian origin under the Indo-Ceylon Agreements of 1964 and 1974, the severe food shortage of 1973 and the 'diaspora' that followed the take-over of estates and alienation of productive land to villagers under the *Land Reform Laws No. 1 of 1972* and *No. 39 of 1975*. Several children who were attending school were sent out to work as domestic servants in other parts of the Island or to be employed in eating houses in the city of Colombo and elsewhere.

A number of schools were also closed on estates that were taken over by the Government; some were converted into Sinhala schools.

The best schools on estates consist of single halls innocent of partitions—adhering literally, one would think, to the 70 year old requirement to provide a school *room*. Many others are housed in half-walled buildings adjoining temples, *crèches*, store-rooms or weighing sheds, and some in buildings not suitable for use as schools. Many of these buildings are ill-ventilated, dark and dingy, and positively unhealthy for children of tender years. The furniture is

equally unsuitable, children often having to sit huddled on benches without desks, with the younger ones accommodated on the floor.

The expenditure incurred on equipment, such as blackboards, maps and pictures, is minimal.

Teachers

The definition of 'competent teacher' appears to have varied over the years. The minimum qualification required today is the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) with passes in six subjects including Language and Arithmetic; two of the passes should be with 'credit'. The salaries that were considered adequate for over a decade were Rs 35 (basic) per month for a single-session teacher and Rs 55 (basic) for a double-session teacher, with a dearness allowance of 30 per cent of the basic salaries. There had been no attempt either to revise these salaries or to provide for the payment of increments. Nevertheless, following a Collective Agreement signed with the Ceylon Estate Staffs' Union, estates in the membership of the Ceylon Estate Employers' Federation paid the teachers in their schools salaries that compared very favourably with those paid to teachers with similar qualifications in government schools, and in addition gave them such fringe benefits as annual bonuses, free tea and firewood. In schools not in the membership of the Federation the salaries were much lower. Married teachers were, however, entitled to free quarters which were required by law to be 'habitable'. One is not surprised, therefore, that the few teachers from estate schools who entered training colleges sought employment under Government on completion of their training.

Curriculum

Although education is compulsory on estates till the age of 14, when a child should be in grade 9, estate schools do not as a rule teach beyond grade 5. They are not required to teach anything more than the 3 R's, and a little speech, games and drill, all this within a 'session' of 2 hours. However, in recent years attempts have been made in some schools to widen the syllabus by the introduction of subjects like geography, environmental studies and a little English. But one wonders how effective such innovations could be when a single teacher is called upon to teach as many as 50 children of varying ages and grades within a space of 2 or 3 hours, while his colleague is carrying out a similar operation in another part of the hall.

In schools that employ only one teacher (sometimes for as many as 100 children in two sessions) it is not unusual for the education of these children to come to a complete standstill when the teacher goes on leave, is transferred out, dies, or merely goes to town.

Treatment of pupils

Children in estate schools were not given CARE¹² milk and buns (which were never a charge on the Government) that were given to children attending government schools, nor were they entitled to free medical examination by Government Medical Officers. When TRI-POSHA (a wheat-soya bean powder) began to be issued by Government, estates were required to pay Re 1 per month as packaging charges. The *Minimum Wages Ordinance* provided for the issue of free meals to children of the Indian plantation workers, but today all that is given is a pound of flour each to all resident children on most estates. CARE biscuits are now supplied to children attending estate schools taken over by Government. The medical services on several estates went out of commission during the first phase of land reform. However, polyclinics have been established on 200 estates, which function one day in the month on each of these estates, but open to all those around them. Their programme includes the issue of TRIPOSHA and other nutrients to under-nourished children of pre-school age and immunisation against communicable diseases.

Several complaints are made about the management of estate schools. Teachers (especially married women teachers) are accused of neglecting their charges or of employing them for private work. But even those who are dedicated to their task will find it difficult to give of their best under the cramped and trying conditions of an estate school. Attempts have been made in recent years both by teachers and education officers (most of them of estate origin) to provide a better deal for the children in these schools. But even their limited successes have been confined to certain areas.

Some achievements

It is worthy of note that even among those whose formal learning was confined to the curriculum offered by the estate school there have been poets like Kurinji Thennavan, Perianpillai and Periasamy, writers like Kumar and song-writers like Kandasamy, who reached national stature in their fields, and many who are able to make balanced and constructive contributions at workers' seminars—a telling reminder of society's unconcern over such waste of talent.

12. Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere. The assistance it dispenses depends on the needs of the community it serves. In Sri Lanka its primary concern is nutrition for undernourished children.

Take-over of estate schools

The Government of the *United Front*,¹³ which was committed to the taking over of all estate schools, and incorporating them into the national system of education, did take over 390 such schools during the last year of its rule. Some of these were to be developed into *mahavidyalayas*,¹⁴ and in some cases a number of schools were to be amalgamated into one school. The criteria for selection were centrality, size of building, non-availability of government schools close by, and availability of space for expansion. In certain cases it was decided to amalgamate the existing estate schools with the nearest government Tamil, Muslim or Sinhala *mahavidyalaya*. The entire process would have reduced the 390 schools that were taken over to 250 centralised units. These decisions, we are informed, were arrived at after several field surveys and consultations with local education officers, and involved an effort not apparent to the layman. UNICEF had undertaken to supply the necessary furniture and equipment, and the Government was to be responsible for the buildings and staff.

But the project could not get beyond the first step of taking over the schools and absorbing into government service existing estate teachers, some of whom possessed only 'service certificates'. Among the reasons were, perhaps, the unsettled conditions caused by the repatriation of persons of Indian origin, the alienation of estate land among villagers, and the Government's own preoccupation with the general elections that were soon to take place.

Some results

The result of all these factors was that conditions in estate schools rapidly deteriorated, the superintendents having no control over them, the teachers being preoccupied with their conditions of service, and the students losing some of the advantages they had enjoyed earlier, such as free books and the services of escorts to accompany them to school. The communal disturbances of August 1977 added greatly to the general confusion, with schools burnt down, furniture destroyed and teachers fleeing to places of safety and refusing to return to their posts.

The Government of the *United National Party* considered it expedient first to complete the programme initiated by its predecessor in respect of the schools already taken over. UNICEF was to provide

13. Comprising the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Lanka Samasamaja Party (Trotskyite) and the Communist Party (Moscow Wing) which entered into an electoral agreement prior to the General Elections of 1970, and also agreed on a common programme to usher in a socialist society.

14. Secondary School teaching up to and including the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level).

basic equipment like maps, chalk, etc. and furniture worth Rs 2,500 for each of these schools. Teachers were to be trained in batches and in-service training given during school vacations to those who could not be released; new teachers were to be appointed from the districts in which the schools were situated; and children were to be given five biscuits each in lieu of the mid-day meal. The Tamil Unit of the Education Ministry, headed by a senior Director, was put in charge of these operations.

But achievement has lagged far behind intention. Nearly 200 teachers from estate schools have entered teacher training colleges, and their places remain largely unfilled. Those who left their posts following the disturbances of August 1977 have helped to add greatly to the number of schools without teachers or without an adequate number of teachers. In some of these schools, chiefly in the Ratnapura and Deniyaya Districts, their places have been filled temporarily by volunteer teachers who either work for no pay or are paid inadequate allowances by private agencies; in some areas even this practice is not allowed.

No new buildings have been put up, nor have extensions been carried out to existing ones. The complaint is made that burnt and damaged buildings have not yet been repaired, and that in some areas even the fact that such repairs are needed has not been brought to the notice of the authorities. This situation appears to have held up UNICEF's offer of furniture and equipment to these schools.

A dearth of teachers with the requisite educational qualifications and the lack of funds are often suggested as reasons for governmental inaction. Representatives of plantation workers assure us, however, that the required personnel are available; they would also recall that only Rs 2 million was originally set apart for expenditure on the take-over of estate schools^{14a} while Rs 20 million was voted recently for extensions to a single privileged school in Colombo; and further that the educational vote for the current year is a little over Rs 930 million. Thus the debate goes on, and thousands of children of those who contribute by their labour to the country's wealth are left out in the cold, while we make elaborate plans to celebrate the International Year of the Child.

5. THE POSITION TODAY—SECONDARY, PRACTICAL AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

Even those who express concern over the educational disabilities of estate children tend as a rule to confine their attention to the

14a. *Daily Mirror* of 16.2.77. According to *The Nation* (Journal of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party) of 27.4.79, it was intended to spend Rs 200 million on 500 schools.

shortcomings of schools on estates, and overlook the fate of those who aspire to attend the secondary schools in the planting districts. The difficulties these children encounter are given below.

There are large areas with sizeable estate Tamil populations where there are no government Tamil schools. To cite a few examples, there are none at Madulsima (which is 38 miles from Badulla and 25 from Passara) or at Roebury, which is 12 miles further away from Madulsima; none at Moneragala, between Namunukula and Bandara-wela, between Horana and Alutgama, at Gampola and in North Matale.

In some of these areas Tamil children are obliged to attend Muslim schools, which owing to the very purpose for which they were established, have no option but to limit the admission of those who are not of the faith.

Some Tamil schools, such as the one at Hali Ela, have been converted into Muslim schools, following a decision reached by the Government in 1956 to divide Tamil medium schools into Tamil majority schools and Muslim schools. It was also decided that the heads of schools should be those who professed the religion of the majority of the children attending them. Heads of schools appointed on this basis would find themselves in a difficult position when children of unlike denominations seek admission.

There are no *madhya mahavidyalayas*¹⁵ (Central Schools) in the whole of the hill country and no government Tamil *mahavidyalaya* in the Southern Province. The Hindu Senior School, the only government Tamil school in the town of Kandy, does not provide the facilities needed for it to be graded as a *mahavidyalaya*; it is also very badly sited, as are many government Tamil schools in the hill country. At Matugama and Deniyaya instruction in the Tamil medium is given not in the well equipped Central Schools, but in the smaller secondary schools that were once run by the Christian missions. Five of the teachers attached to the Tamil stream at St Mathew's School, Deniyaya, are employed and paid (sub-scale) salaries by NOVIB (Netherlands Organisation of International Beneficence). It was said with some bitterness that these appointments were made after a strike by the students concerned when other methods of persuasion had failed.

A feature common to two-stream schools in the hill country and not absent in other areas, is that the Tamil stream is relegated to the afternoon session. Such an arrangement denies these children the use of the laboratory, and gives them no scope for games and other

15. These were specially well equipped and well staffed and admitted students from the *mahavidyalayas* in the districts. It was intended that there should be one such school in each electorate.

outdoor activities. It also keeps young children away from their homes till late, travelling on unlit and lonely roads. Sometimes, as at Sumana Mahavidyalaya, Talawakelle, they are allowed the use of only the junior section of the school (away from the laboratory). It has been pointed out that in this area, where over 90 per cent of the population is Tamil, there are two Sinhala *mahavidyalayas* and one Muslim *mahavidyalaya*. (*Congress News*, 15 August 1978).¹⁶

Children in plantation areas have also suffered by the process of 're-organisation' by which Tamil streams in the better equipped schools were closed, and the children studying in the Tamil medium sent to poorly equipped ones which do not provide for the teaching of science, music or handicrafts. This happened in various degrees at Badulla, Matale, Nawalapitiya, Passara, Wattegama, Ginigathena and at Talatu Oya in the Hewaheta electorate. Parents have complained that their children have been sent out of schools they had helped to establish. The Ministerial order to close the Tamil stream at Christ Church College, Wattegama, was successfully contested in a court of law, but no relief appears to have been granted to the children affected by the order. The Government Central School at Talatu Oya stands on land donated by a Tamil parent.

An almost total neglect appears to have been the fate of even the exclusively Tamil medium schools not affected by the processes mentioned above, as indicated by the contrast their very appearance makes with that of their more favoured neighbours. Many of them are overcrowded, ill-equipped and under-staffed; some of them lack even such basic amenities as drinking water and an adequate number of toilets.

The Tamil Mahavidyalaya at Welimada appears, in regard to buildings and equipment, almost exactly where it was when it was first started in 1937. The senior section of the school, with its half walls of brick and mortar, adjoins and is a few feet below the main road on which a bi-weekly fair is held. The primary section, also a half-walled building, but of timber, is in dangerous proximity to a river, which in 1975 invaded the school and carried away its furniture. The town boasts of one of the best equipped Central Schools in the Island, which once had a Tamil stream.

Science classes were started at Saraswathy Vidyalayam, Badulla, in May 1975, but adequately qualified teachers have yet to be appointed. At Kadiresan Kumara Vidyalaya, Nawalapitiya, the Parent-Teachers' Association is obliged to employ 7 volunteer teachers, and at the Kanishta Vidyalaya (Junior School) 8. There are also 4 such teachers

16. For recent changes see post script.

in the Tamil section of the Balika Mahavidyalaya (girls' school) formerly St Andrew's College, Nawalapitiya. These volunteers are unemployed boys and girls from the estates, who receive as wages Rs 100 per quarter collected by subscription from parents and well-wishers.

The children of the higher grade employees on estates and their counterparts in the towns who have no access to the better equipped government schools patronise private fee-levying schools or make use of the facilities for education in the other parts of the Island. It is the children of the manual workers who have suffered most.

Practical and tertiary education Technical institutions run by the Government do not admit the children of the 'stateless'. There are also hardly any others of Indian origin attending them, one of the reasons being that they do not provide instruction in Tamil¹⁷. Such training as is given in employment skills is by private organisations like the Socio-Economic Training Institute, Kandy (SETIK), the Uva Social and Cultural Development Centre (USCOD), Badulla, and the Co-ordinating Secretariat for Plantation Areas, Kandy.

Very few children of manual workers on estates have entered University. The scholarships given by trade unions or by the Indian High Commission have as a rule gone to those who are comparatively well off and not to those who require such assistance most. As many of them are still 'stateless' they are not entitled to free education at the University, or to bursaries or bank loans.¹⁸

The environment of the child on the estate A word may be said here about the environment in which the estate child lives, which is hardly conducive to study.

Nearly 70 per cent of the houses on estates consist of a single room, 12 ft by 10 ft, in which sometimes as many as 10 persons live. These rooms are dark and ill-ventilated, and lit at night by a single oil lamp. Many of these lines are in very bad repair, and the surroundings insanitary. Death is not an infrequent visitor.¹⁹

17. For recent changes see postscript.

18. For recent changes see postscript.

19. According to records maintained by the Ceylon Planters' Association in respect of estates which were members of their Estates Health Scheme, which comprised the better run estates, the still-birth rate on these estates was a little over 100 per 1000 births for several years, the infant mortality rate per 1000 live births rose from 100.6 in 1972 to 142.7 in 1974 (on returns received from 350 estates). The maternal mortality rate which averages a little more than 2 per 1000 rose to 3.6 in 1973, and the general death rate, from a little over 11 per 1000, to 18.7 in 1974. According to available, government statistics, the general mortality rate on estates in 1974 was 24.2 per 1000. The national averages for this year were 9.0 deaths per 1000, (8.1 in 1972) the infant mortality rate 51.2 (45.6 in 1974), and the maternal mortality rate 1.0 (1.3 in 1972).

However, a programme of building cottage-type dwellings and of converting single lines into those of the cottage-type is under way. This will involve considerable expenditure (some of which will be met from foreign sources) and will take several years to complete. The urgent need would be repairs to existing lines and the provision of lights and an adequate water supply.

The educated unemployed The problem of the educated unemployed is more acute in this sector than in any other. Having scaled the rugged steepes of the educational mountain, and reached the dizzy heights of a pass (with or without credits) in the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary or Advanced Level, estate youth look forward to the clerical and supervisory jobs on estates to which they feel they have a claim. But current recruitment methods keep them out of these jobs. Some idle at home and are an embarrassment to their parents; others take to manual labour for which they have no inclination, and seek to express through flashy clothes and unwise spending the frustrations caused by uncongenial work and unattractive surroundings.

To sum up The children of our plantation workers of Indian origin, who form nearly a tenth of our children of school age, are educationally the most discriminated against as a group. There are as many of them out of school as are in school; and the schools they are able to attend hardly deserve to be called by that name. The drop-out rates in these schools are the highest in the country; few can aspire to secondary education, and those that do are kept out of the better schools. They have no facilities for pre-school education, and the function of the estate *crèche*, which could be developed to provide these facilities, appears to be looked upon as a means to provide employment to adults with little concern for the rights of the child. Technical education is denied to a category of students who would take to such education more readily than most others. University education is almost completely beyond their reach. State and employer have looked upon them as potential cheap labour rather than as children and as human beings. The laws framed for their benefit merely adorn our statute books; and there has all along been a stubborn disinclination to spend on them. Employment even in the spheres where they feel they have a claim is denied them.

6. SOME SUGGESTIONS

The picture that has emerged so far is a depressing one. It is not maintained that there are no other areas in the country where such conditions exist or that any one sector should be singled out for favoured treatment. The question should rather be seen as a matter

of fairness and justice towards an easily identified sector of the population whose educational disadvantages are obvious, particularly when one realises that their labour is responsible for a substantial portion of our national income and for a major share of our foreign exchange earnings. Government has already seen the need for urgent action in this sphere, and has announced its intention to rectify anomalies and remove injustices. It is in this context that the following suggestions are made.

The principle of absolute equality in educational and employment opportunities should not only be accepted, but also proclaimed and acted upon at every stage. The disabilities that this sector has been allowed to suffer for so long in the field of education should be realised, and a determined and sustained effort made to correct them.

This would naturally involve increased expenditure on buildings and equipment and on additional staff in schools and at all levels of the administration. But what is more essential is the appointment to the districts of officers who are sensitive to the needs of the people whom they are required to serve, committed to their welfare and possessed of the ability to enlist the support and co-operation of the local community.

There should also be a readiness on the part of policy-makers and administrators to engage in a continuing dialogue with those involved in the service of the plantation workers, and to give and to receive information. School censuses and similar documents should be made more easily accessible to the public, and in the language of their choice.

Pre-schools

Estate *crèches* should be entrusted to young women from the plantations who have been trained not only to look after children, but also to educate mothers in child care and domestic hygiene. They should be able to tell the children stories from their own folklore, teach them to sing songs they themselves had learnt at their mothers' knees, and even function as nursery teachers. The steps already taken to modernise the *crèches* by providing them with cement floors, brick, lime-washed walls, ceilings, water supply and electric lights are, no doubt, signs of a new and enlightened attitude towards the worker's child.

Primary schools

Complaints have been made that in the selection of schools to be taken over, those who could authentically speak for the community—parents, local organisations and workers' unions—were not consulted. This

procedure has ignored two basic principles, namely the right of the parent to be consulted regarding the education of his children (as required by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), and the need for the involvement of the community in matters concerning its welfare. Moreover, there was the danger that by not listening to representatives of local opinion much relevant information might not have been made available to them. Have the difficulties that will be encountered by little children who may now be required to traverse long distances been taken into account? Is it realised that well equipped schools have been left out, or that on certain estates children have been deprived of the facilities they had enjoyed earlier? Is it again known that in certain cases estate school teachers are now obliged to travel long distances or to spend large sums of money on board and lodging, only to receive wages at daily rates lower than those paid to manual workers on estates?

Schools on estates should be brought into line with the other primary schools in the country as regards buildings and equipment, scheme of studies and teaching staff. In order to ensure that as many children as possible attend school, many of the schools on estates should continue to be primary schools acting as feeder schools to the secondary schools in the towns. It may be necessary, where estates are situated at great distances from the towns, for schools on estates to be up-graded into *mahavidyalayas*.

Secondary schools

The general principle should be observed that as far as possible children from the different communities should be accommodated in the same school. It is the view of representatives of plantation workers that such a practice should not be followed except where the numbers of children belonging to the different language groups are roughly equal. But whatever the linguistic or ethnic composition of the schools, the principle of absolute equality of treatment to the different groups should be rigorously observed.

Where children attend a common school those in the two language streams should be encouraged to play in the same teams, be members of the same scout troop or guide company, and join in each other's cultural activities.

If they attend different schools, every effort should be made to encourage such co-operation in activities that could be arranged in the town. The Government's decision that the children of the two linguistic groups should be encouraged to learn each other's language is, in this context, welcome.

Practical and tertiary education

Children of plantation workers, including those of the 'stateless', should not be shut out of government vocational training institutions. Courses should be employment-oriented and relevant to the environment of the worker. Some arrangement should be made to ensure that those who are due to leave for India are taught the skills that would be of use to them in the areas in which they will be settled.

The above categories of students should be given the same facilities for higher education, including university education, as the other children of the land, and education regarded as a requirement that transcends citizenship boundaries.

Other essentials

The educational standard of a community cannot be raised without steps being taken to raise its standards of living, health and housing. It will also be necessary to ensure that those who are accepted as citizens of Sri Lanka are enabled to integrate with the community around them without sacrifice of their self respect or loss of their religious or cultural identity; and that those who will for some time continue to be labelled 'stateless' do not suffer a sense of insecurity.

Duties of non-governmental organisations

The efforts made by the State for the welfare of the plantation workers and of their children should be supplemented by those of private bodies, e.g. religious institutions, community service and other welfare organisations; for only a concerted effort backed by a national conscience can achieve the breakthrough that is needed.

1. These organisations can help by:
 - a. donating books and equipment to schools;
 - b. offering scholarships to poor but deserving students;
 - c. meeting the cost of buildings;
 - d. running or sponsoring hostels for children who would otherwise have to travel long distances to attend schools.
2. They can sponsor institutions for:
 - a. teaching children of pre-school age;
 - b. training teachers of such children;
 - c. teaching employment skills, having in mind the needs of the country and the environment of the trainee.

3. They can organise activities that would bring children of the different communities together,—cultural festivals, *shramadana* programmes, etc. and work camps and seminars to educate the youth on their duties, the elders on an awareness of their rights, and the public on the conditions in the plantations.

4. It will be their function to engage in study and research and to publish information

5. They should also keep in touch with the Government, Members of Parliament, workers' organisations, parent-teachers' associations and other groups. Above all, they should strive to create the climate for resolving the problems that have so far escaped solution.

POSTSCRIPT

Political changes

Since the text of this monograph was written significant changes have taken place in the world of the plantation worker. The Political Wing of the Ceylon Workers' Congress (the trade union representing the largest number of plantation workers of Indian origin in Sri Lanka²⁰) decided to lend its support to the Government, and its leader Mr S. Thondaman conferred Cabinet rank as Minister of Rural Industrial Development. This has given a stature and a dignity to a people who for thirty years could not send an elected member to Parliament.

The present Constitution gives them the right to correspond with the Government in their language and to call for copies of personal documents, such as birth and death certificates, in Tamil. Electoral lists too could be made available to them in this language. Those who had hitherto been designated 'citizens by registration' have been assured of the same rights as citizens by descent, including that of settling down in any part of the Island. The 'stateless', it has been guaranteed, will enjoy the same fundamental rights as citizens of Sri Lanka for the next ten years. Citizens living on estates may now vote and contest seats at Local Government elections.

Economic development Rural Development Societies now function at Drayton Estate, Kotagala, and Bogahawatte Estate, Patana; more such societies are due to be inaugurated in other estates. Plantation workers may now obtain loans from State-run banks for the purchase of milch cows. It has also been decided to set up vocational training centres at Kandy for the educated unemployed of all communities. These measures are due largely to the initiative of the newly appointed Minister of Rural Industrial Development.

Education—Acts and assurances

In the sphere of education, which is the main concern of our study, the following steps have been taken:

1) A government Tamil *mahavidyalaya* was ceremonially opened at Middleton Estate, Talawakelle, on the 12th February 1979. It is housed in an abandoned tea factory reconditioned for the purpose. A building designed to house a modern secondary school and located in a more appropriate site has been promised.

20. The Ceylon Workers' Congress had a 'paid-up' membership of 362,327 on 31.3.79. Numerically the next largest is the Lanka Jatika Estate Workers' Union (UNP) which reports a membership of between 250,000 and 300,000. The two unions, we now understand, have decided to work together.

2) A sum of a little over Rs 4 million has been set apart for the construction of schools on selected estates, and science laboratories and assembly halls for centrally situated Tamil *mahavidyalayas*²¹. The contracts for the construction of these buildings have been offered to the Parent-Teacher Associations of these schools, which are expected to utilise the services of estate youths for this purpose. The Ceylon Workers' Congress has set the example by undertaking the building of a school at Norton Estate with labour trained at their school for masons and carpenters at Hendala.

The present measure is meant to benefit 76 schools. The number of estate schools taken over by the State is 390, reduced by a process of amalgamation to 250 centralised units; there are more than 400 which are yet under estate management. The question has been asked why the Ministry of Education, which normally entrusts the construction of school buildings to its district officers, should in this instance hand over this task to Parent-Teacher Associations of estate schools, which, even where they exist, are not competent to handle such matters. Could not this responsibility be undertaken by the local Education Officers and the Regional Managers of the Janatha Estates Development Board and the State Plantations Corporation, who could in turn seek the assistance of estate superintendents to utilise their labour? Parent-Teacher Associations and voluntary organisations could perhaps help to encourage and foster the involvement of the community in this enterprise

3) At a conference held in Colombo on the 13th February this year²² the Hon'ble the Minister of Education and Higher Education conceded that 'affairs were far from desirable', and stressed the need for correct statistics and an overall comprehensive plan for the education of the children of plantation workers, such matters apparently having not been attended to earlier. He, therefore, instructed his officers to ascertain—

- (a) the number of children of school age in need of education,
- (b) the number of schools needed for the education of these children,
- (c) the number of schools actually in existence,
- (d) the number of estate schools already taken over, and
- (e) ways of taking over the balance of the schools.

He undertook to see that the teacher-pupil ratio in the schools in the up-country areas was not less favourable than the national average.

21. *Congress News* of 15.1.79 and subsequent communications.

22. *Congress News* of 15.2.79.

Every electorate would have at least one Grade 1 school for correspondence courses under the Open University Scheme (which would enable teachers to qualify from their homes), no Tamil stream would be dried up without the written sanction of either himself or his Secretary, and he would establish science laboratories and special girls' schools wherever they were found to be necessary. Students from the plantation areas were free to enter the existing Junior Technical Institutions, where instruction was in Sinhala. Language, according to the Minister, was no barrier, because 'technical language was the same' Many, however, would disagree.

The Government's new scheme in regard to university admissions²³ holds out a chance for larger numbers of students from the plantation areas to enter the universities, provided that the minimum facilities are available in such areas for them to gain the necessary standard of educational attainment.

CWC Convention— Expectations

At the 26th Convention of the Ceylon Workers' Congress held at Badulla from the 9th to the 11th March 1979,²⁴ His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sri Lanka assured the plantation workers of Indian origin that the age of exploitation was over, and their children would enjoy equal facilities with other children as regards schooling and employment. His Government treated all citizens alike; he would like to see these workers take an equal place with other citizens in the political life of 'our common motherland'.

The President of the Ceylon Workers' Congress added that the cry for national integration would sound hollow unless 'meaningful and concrete steps were taken to create opportunities for all sections of the people to play an equal role in all spheres of national activity'. He spoke a few words in Sinhala, and this gesture was graciously reciprocated by the District Minister, who replied in Tamil.

Setbacks—and an achievement

But, while these assurances and gestures may be regarded as expressions of Government's good intentions, which have no doubt encouraged plantation workers and their children to emerge from their line rooms in increasing numbers into the wider world of their neighbours, one is also perturbed by happenings in these areas which would thwart the carrying out of these aims and intentions.

23. According to this scheme 30 per cent of the university admissions for the academic year 1979/1980 would be on merit, 55 per cent assigned on a district basis, and the balance 15 per cent reserved for under-privileged areas.

24. *Ceylon Daily News* of 12.3.79.

Volunteer teachers who have worked several months for little remuneration to keep estate schools functioning are discontinued, and their places given to outsiders with lesser qualifications. Since then, however, over 300 volunteer teachers have been promised paid employment without prejudice to these recent appointments, according to information from the C. W. C. In some areas non-citizens are denied employment on estates while in others children under 14 are employed to meet the shortage of labour caused by repatriation. In one district the new cottage-type lines are reserved for outsiders in order to induce them to accept estate employment, while resident labour continue to occupy 'condemned' line rooms, which for this very reason are not being repaired. Resident workers are sometimes faced with threats of eviction from estates on which they had worked for generations.

Political and bureaucratic intransigence appears to obstruct the implementation of Government's measures for the welfare of plantation workers. Local resentment at the granting of political rights to these workers has prevented many of them from seeking to exercise these rights. Nevertheless, two members of the Ceylon Workers' Congress were allowed to contest seats at the Local Government Elections as nominees of the United National Party (in areas with large concentrations of estate Tamils). They were both elected, and one of them is now Vice Chairman of the Hatton-Dickoya Urban Council. These are matters for satisfaction, because such a possibility would have been unthinkable some months ago.

Duty of Government

It is the duty of a Government pledged to the ushering in of a free and just society to ensure that nothing is allowed to happen that would in any way hinder or delay the achievement of such a goal. Quite obviously in this great and lovely land—even if it is a comparatively small island—there are many areas, besides those in which plantation workers live, which need rehabilitation, re-construction and integral development. We are concerned with all such areas where any people who are underprivileged live. But in this brief study our special concern has been with the plantation workers and with justice to them by those in the corridors of power. In giving them, too, the real benefits of a just society, as we have indicated earlier, our Government can be assured of the loyal and whole-hearted co-operation of every citizen who has the welfare of the worker and of the country at heart.

QUESTIONS

1. Compare the conditions in which you live and the conditions of the plantation workers—and state your reactions if you were a 'child of the plantations' coming from the line rooms.
2. Because true religion has to help us to overcome human problems, suggest practical ways in which you could help to overcome these problems.
3. What **constructive changes** would you sponsor in the following areas:
 - (a) The character and conditions of the line rooms in which children grow,
 - (b) The quality of education in estate schools,
 - (c) The provision of extra-curricular activities for children on estates,
 - (d) Doing all that is possible to implement the practical suggestions on pp. 17-21 of this pamphlet,
 - (e) The formation and growth of public opinion in the area in which you live and work on the facts and issues involved. (This would include your commendation and distribution of this pamphlet to as many as you meet).
 - (f) The use of this pamphlet for study by groups and organisations in your area,
 - (g) Appealing to your M.P., members of the Cabinet, the Prime Minister and the President to act soon on all matters on which you think early action should be taken for the welfare of the nation.

C. F

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