

LETTERS

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A reply to Dr. J. G. Hattotuwa

I refer to Dr. J. G. Hattotuwa's letter to you appearing at page 6 of 'The Island' of the 12th of April 1994, under the caption "Politics and Social Integration".

From Dr. H's letter it is clear that it is not only "the young who venture out of their homes and hearths to pay the supreme sacrifice for their motherland" who have to be "acquainted" with "what transpired way back in 1948" but also those arm-chair critics who have remained at home to psycho-analyse mental patients who chance to come their way!

Dr. H, referring to 1948, says that the total population was 6 million out of which the Sinhalese were 5 million and the minorities were 1 million. This is totally false! At the actual census of 1946, the total population was 6.7 million out of which the Sinhalese were 4.60 million and all the minorities were 2.04 million. The percentages were roughly 2/3 to 1/3 or 68% to 32%. Dr. H will have to explain from where he obtained his figures of what prevailed in 1948. Otherwise his figures are bogus.

Talking again of 1948, Dr. H says "there was one major party, the National Congress, which later amalgamated with all the minor parties to form the U.N.P.". This, also, is totally false! The Ceylon National Congress ceased to exist much before 1948 and the UNP itself came into existence in 1946.

Dr. H next tilts foolishly at G. G. Ponnambalam and says "an irate Lawyer G. G. Ponnambalam who foolishly demanded a 50:50 representation", which "ruined a

closely-knit social integration". The chronological run of Dr. H's arguments suggests that even this demand was put forward in or after 1948. If this is so, that, too is totally false once again! Ponnambalam put forward his demand for 50:50 way back in June 1936 and one must consider the situation then that necessitated 50:50 demand.

Firstly, what was the population at that time? At the projected census of 1931, (because the previous actual census was only in 1921), the total population was 5.31 million, out of which the Sinhalese were 3.55 million and the minorities were 1.75 million. Again, roughly, a 66% to 33% situation.

Secondly, when 50:50 was put forward we had the Executive Committee system under the Donoughmore Constitution. Far from there being "a closely-knit social integration", discrimination was rampant even then. Promotions were not done properly, allocation of funds for development purposes of the Tamil areas were not adequate. As a result the whole gamut and social fabric was affected. On top of this, one must not forget the formation of the Pan-Sinhala Board of Ministers, which itself proved that there was no "social integration" of any kind, "closely knit" or otherwise! The 50:50 demand was a reaction to the formation of the Pan-Sinhala Board of Ministers.

What did 50:50 mean? It meant that, in any legislature there should be 50% of the seats to the majority community, whilst the remaining 50% of the

seats should be shared by all the minorities.

Why was 50:50 put forward? It was felt that if the representation in the legislature was so divided, there would be no chance for the majority community to push through discriminatory legislation.

In 1936, Ponnambalam fore-saw that the Pan-Sinhala Ministry was only a fore-runner to things to come. Discriminatory pieces of legislation like the Citizenship Act of 1948, the Sinhala Only Act of 1956, the making of Buddhism the State Religion in 1972, etc., could never have been passed. The Government, even if it had been from the majority community, would not have been able to indulge even in administratively discriminatory acts. If one would carry it to its logical extent, there would have been no discriminatory standardisation. There would have been no armed struggle or militancy.

There would have been no demand for Tamil Eelam, no All Party Conferences, no Prevention of Terrorism Acts, no assassinations and no bombs in hotels and Wijetunga need not have kissed Thondaman and begged of Thondaman to save him and the SAS and Hela Urumaya need not be sulking now in a corner. Even Dr. Colvin R. de Silva would have had no occasion to say "one language, two nations. Two languages, one nation". Today we have two nations and two States!! With this irrefutable scenario, would not Dr. H. concede that we all must thank God for Ponnambalam's 50:50? If we had accepted Ponnambalam's 50:50 then, the world would not be re-

ferring to us now as a bloody powder-keg.

Dr. H should also know that Ponnambalam was officially offered 60:40 and he was not prepared to take it and compromise. It seems, that the Sinhalese and Tamils 50 years ago were able to know each others minds better and therefore understand each other better, if you understand what I mean!! Ponnambalam was blamed for not accepting 60:40. In fact, in an unofficial move, a special emissary was sent to Ponnambalam requesting him to accept 55:45. But he was still not prepared to compromise. Anything less than 50:50 was not going to serve its purpose.

Even though the All Ceylon Tamil Congress was instrumental in having section 29 placed in the Soulbury Constitution, that section did not prevent discriminatory legislation, which proves the point that only 50:50 could have prevented discriminatory legislation.

If "the Jaffna Tamils were enjoying having carved out over 80% of the Government cake" it was because, as Dr. H puts it very graphically, "the Sinhala was lumbering and limbering from their solacing stupor"! Therefore, one has only to blame the Sinhalese and not the more industrious Tamils.

Dr. H talks of Ponnambalam's "foolhardy move". Surely, the Sinhalese must thank Ponnambalam for "the salutary effect" the 50:50 cry had on the Sinhalese, because he found that the five million Sinhalese were absolutely no match to the one million minorities till 50:50 woke them up!!

Dr. H charges that there are 33 political parties in Sri Lanka. These mushroomed during President Jayewardena's regime to keep pace with what was happening amongst the UNP Parliamentarians, all of whom were either a Minister, Deputy Minister, State Minister, Project Minister or Just Minister. So cannot a charitable interpretation be given to say that the "Numbers Game" was the thinking of the times?

Regarding the Tamil or Muslim communal parties of today. At least, Dr. H will have to credit us with honesty if nothing else. We call our parties Tamil or Muslim and are happy and proud of it and would not stoop to do the things which the supposed "national parties" do, like bring Sinhala Only in 24 hours or launch on naked and rabid anti-Tamil and anti-Muslim sentiments as we have seen during the last 12 months. Dr. H who talks of Ponnambalam's "foolish demand" and foolhardy move"

are not talk in that vein about the anti-minority wave because he would be lynched by those who want to see the end of the minorities.

To hell with social integration! What social integration between people who are not equals?

I will not agree with Dr. H that we must "write off the past". How could we do that? We will not have anything to talk of if we do not talk of what happened during the last 2500 years of our great and glorious existence.

I will not agree to be called a 'Lankan' because this island is supposed to be a Sinhala land. I insist on being called a Tamil till all those anti-minority elements hold both my hands, kiss them and seek apology and promise to do all what (SIC) I want and ask me to save them!!!! To do it only to a Thondaman will not satisfy a Ponnambalam!!!

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