

Television in Focus

James Halloran

In most western countries children spend a great deal of time in front of the television, be it in the general living room, a special recreational room, or their own bedroom. In some relatively affluent areas there may be three or more television sets in the same home, and there are reports of children spending more time watching television than they spend in school, and certainly more than they spend talking to their parents.

Clearly, a medium which attracts so much attention and takes up so much time cannot be ignored. In fact we have to be prepared to accept the possibility that television should be regarded, along with family, school, church etc., as an important agent in the development or socialization of the child. Additionally, in some countries, most schools have the necessary facilities and equipment and, consequently, many children are also able to view (even if what they watch is somewhat different) in the school as well as in the home.

Children differ in so many ways. What children actually watch on television, how they attend to it, what they perceive, how they interpret the experience, what they remember, what they recall, how the media experience fits in with other experiences and information are all influenced by other factors. These include the stage of development of the child, role of parents, availability of other relevant information, alternative sources and perceived substitutes, attitudes of peers, need for expression, search for meaning, and so on.

Parents from different social classes control the viewing of pre-school children in different ways (some, not at all). Young delinquents talk far less about what they see on television, not only to parents, but also to teachers and friends, than do non-delinquents from similar backgrounds; success at school, the

degree of commitment to school values and the meaningfulness of the school experience influence the degree to which young people become involved in various aspects of pop culture; university students and the police interpret the portrayal of political demonstrations on television in quite different ways (individuals from both groups actually "seeing" things which didn't actually happen); those with personal experiences of living or working with ethnic minorities make different use of the media treatment of race-related material.

There are some social scientists in the United States, however, who would not equate television with experiences of other media, still less with non-media experiences. To them, the electronic medium as it currently operates in the USA, is qualitatively, in fact totally, different from other media and other sources of information and experience. They see television as the cultural arm of society, disseminating cultural symbols into the public consciousness and producing a cultural homogeneity far more pervasive than researchers in other countries, as well as other researchers in their own country, have been able to detect.

The extensive portrayal of violence on television is seen not so much as a source of imitation or stimulus to aggression but as creating fear, apprehension and insecurity which may then be translated into a firm, possibly an excessive, support for the forces of law and order, and may even lead eventually to submission and subservience to the State.

This argument, although many would question its validity, is another more up-to-date and more complex version of the oft-stated general case that, on the whole in western society, the media operate in the interests of the establishment and tend to serve the system by legitimating, maintaining and reinforcing the status quo. In passing, we might note that in non-western societies the media may perform the same basic function, albeit in a different, more

direct and deliberate manner. Everywhere the medium is the system, and the medium is an agent in the socialization of the child.

It is important, however, to emphasize that there is much more to the influence of television and to an understanding of its role in child development than can possibly be ascertained by the use of the conventional, and perhaps misleading, research approaches which focus on imitation, modelling, identification, attitude change, and so on.

But to question the validity of this research is certainly not to deny the influence of television. On the contrary, it is to demonstrate the complexity and subtlety of a process which could be far more pervasive and influential than many would believe possible. Basically it has more to do with frameworks of interpretation than discrete messages and direct effects.

For example, children are almost bound to be influenced in some way or other by the basic values which underline so much of what television provides. In most western societies television, particularly when associated with advertising in emphasizing "planned obsolescence", "constructive discontent" or "the ostentatious display of conspicuous consumption" gives the message loud and clear, and the message is that material prosperity is what matters.

School and Community Television in India

The media pay great attention to the prosperity goals and objectives but they have little to say about the legitimate ways of achieving the advocated goals, and there is no doubt that there are many people in most countries who do not have the chance to achieve them legitimately.

By operating in this way television may help in the development of unrealistic expectations, make some

people aware of their relative deprivation and lead to frustration, and possibly aggression or defiance. When television programmes with such values are exported to developing countries, the position becomes even more problematic.

The points just made may not appear compatible with the earlier comments about individual selectivity with regard to perception, interpretation, reaction, etc. In this connexion it should first be stressed that when it is said that different children make different use of the media, we are not thinking in terms of a sort of individual anarchy. Children may be grouped together, and groups which have several relevant factors in common (e.g. age, sex, social class, education) may be found to use the media in similar ways.

Secondly, and more importantly, the children's selections are not unlimited. They are restricted by what is provided by television. Television sets the agenda, and to that degree controls the discourse, usually in a relatively consistent, conformist manner. Children select from television and the other media in an attempt to give meaning to their lives, and these selections will reflect their non-media experiences and general situations.

This is how television becomes an agent in the socialization process—a process which may involve coming to terms, or otherwise dealing with, several sets of values (although one might be predominant) rather than to just one.

In the same way, it can be misleading to talk about television *per se*. Some research indicates that increasingly, over the years, television has come to be regarded as the most used and the most reliable of information. But it is interesting to note that when questions are asked in research which deal with the different matters covered by television (e.g. music, morals, politics, sport, fashion, etc.) then the use, perceived credibility and influence of television, vis-a-vis other sources, vary according to the subject.

Moreover, television varies from country to country, not only in terms of output, but also in terms of its relationship to other institutions. More than simply an electronic medium, television is, above all, a social-political institution and its policy, *modus operandi* and output have to be seen within the appropriate social-political frameworks which it will reflect and reinforce.

If we are looking at the relationship between television and children, then the overall picture will be different in those countries where communication policies and education policies are clearly articulated and closely related from what will be in those countries where there is no planned relationship between the two, and where the forces of the market-place might predominate, at least as far as television policy and programmes are concerned.

The fact that there are different policies with regard to education and television in different countries means, quite obviously, that alternative approaches are available for consideration in any given country. Unfortunately, because of the nature of the relevant social systems, the debate is often polarized into a not very fruitful confrontation between "freedom" and "central control".

There must be something to learn from all systems. Perhaps we could start by questioning the elitist or top-downwards approach to broadcasting which seems to prevail in all countries, irrespective of political climate. We know it is not necessary that television should always take the form of the few walking to the many—often about the position of the many from the standpoint of the few—but it usually does take this form.

We might begin to look for alternative forms. Decisions about media policy are governed by considerations of ideology, political expediency, private profit and the need to maintain existing structures, although needless to say these are usually rationalized in terms of the public good, or the communication needs of society.

their choice. Moreover, a theatre or a cinema audience in a building form a collective group, following the rules of group behaviour.

In television we have a passive audience, mostly confined to the privacy of their homes, expecting to be amazed, informed or, more rarely, educated. The television audience is unique in the diversity of the individuals who compose it. Their attitudes to programmes differ widely, depending on their social background, religious and political background, education and a number of other factors. If the programme is displeasing him, he feels affronted, whereas in the theatre the individuals' reactions are subsumed into the collective reaction of the audience.

This unique characteristic in television has a fundamental bearing on the attitude of the TV programme-maker whose only true knowledge about his audience is its size.

CULTURAL DOMINATION

A typical example of the possibilities of cultural domination through this media is presented in the most recent issue of "Media Asia", the Singapore based Asian Mass Communication and Information Centre's Quarterly (AMIC) by a Bolivian Development Communication specialist Luis Ramiro Beltram where he analyses the "U.S.-Latin American Case". Beltram is emphatic that the term "cultural imperialism" denotes "a verifiable process of social influence by which a nation imposes on other countries its set of beliefs, values, knowledge and behavioural norms as well as its overall style of life". For him, "cultural imperialism through communication is not an occasional and fortuitous event... it is a vital process for "imperial" countries to secure and maintain economic domination and political hegemony over others". He illustrates his argument with the example of TV, where, he says on the average, one-third of the television programmes broadcast in the region are canned imports from the US, while most of the locally made programmes follow closely the US production formats".

Beltram referring specifically to the nature of the influence by itself, the magnitude of the US communication input in Latin American countries clearly indicates that it cannot be deemed inconsequential for their cultures. However, quantitative indicators cannot depict the nature of this overwhelming influence. Thus attention must be

SWITCHING OFF PERSONALITIES

During the 1972 US presidential elections, Republican Nixon and Democrat McGovern were allowed to purchase equal prime time on the U.S. coast TV network. Committed Republicans are known to have switched off their TV sets everytime McGovern came on the screen to spell out his Party's policies. Committed Democrats behaved similarly. Theirs was a silent expression of remorse and animosity towards the opposing party. By switching off the set and thereby a 'face' they gain psychological satisfaction in knocking off that 'face'. When Martin Luther King, in the heyday of his civil rights movement, was a constant attraction on TV, the black population in the United States would cheer him wildly within the confines of their homes. Moderate

whites who were reasonably educated listened to him merely to understand the man and his goal. But the majority of the urban and rural white population are known to have switched off the TV set the moment King's face came on the screen. It is a silent rejection of both the man and his goal. TV is therefore in addition to a medium of manipulation of the masses also a tool of protest by the masses. A disliked leader constantly displayed on TV can be "silenced" by the turn of a knob by any citizen. Commentators of the US scene have noted that this ability to switch off a leader by the press of a button has aided the crisis of legitimacy of leadership in the US over the last decade.

paid to the content of the US-made messages that permeate the day-to-day existence of millions of Latin Americans. A few illustrations will be sufficiently presented here with reference only to television programming, magazines and some aspects of news reporting.

Research on television in Latin America is still neither abundant nor sophisticated enough. There is, however, a set of studies pertinent to the instillation of alien values mainly through adventure (war, crime, spies and cowboys) stories, soap operas, commercials and serials of comics, most of which are imported from the US. A review attempting to articulate the findings of these studies, suggests two opposite forms of TV stimulation through which such ideological influence seems to be channelled. One is positive stimulation seeking an exciting-energizing effect on the audience such as that required to induce a compulsive desire to buy goods and enjoy services. The other form is negative stimulation seeking a narcotic analgesic effect such as that necessary to keep society quiet by inducing evasion from reality. The following values are identified in the first category: individualism, elitism, racism, materialism, aggressiveness, adventurism and authoritarianism. Those in the second are: conservatism, conformism, self-

defeatism, providentialism and romanticism.

A couple of brief and partial illustrations follows.

Latin American Pattern for Sri Lanka TV?

Latin American researchers have highlighted the negative impact of canned TV programmes manufactured in the US as has been documented in this article. A casual survey of Sri Lanka TV suggests that our TV today is very much in the Latin American mould today.

Virtually all the entertainment programmes are from the US: Mannix, Petrocelli, Kojah, Mission Impossible, Bionic Woman, Debbie Reynolds Show, the Odd Couple are all US inputs produced for a US audience. They reflect perceptions of US reality by certain sections of the U.S. decision-making elite.

The programmes reflect also some of the changes that have occurred in the US over the last ten years, changes which have had some liberalising effect. Thus programmes like Petrocelli, Kojah and Mission Impossible have their hero figures or their supporting figures drawn from the repressed minorities; a situation which would have been impossible fifteen years ago. Similarly the children's programme "Sesame Street" reflects some aspects of reality and aspirations of the American underclass.

However, American TV remains still trivial and a disburser often of very negative values, specially with respect to violence. In this it fares very badly with such other Western networks like those

"In addition to verifying the induction of violent behavioural tendencies among Venezuelan children, a study by Santoro (1975) found stereotyped beliefs as the following being instilled in them by TV: (1) the "good guys" are from the US; the bad, from other countries, mostly Germans; (2) the good guys are white, single and rich and tend to work as detectives, policemen and military; and (3) the bad guys are black and poor and tend to work as clerks and labourers. Moreover, good or bad, most protagonists have English names but, when Spanish names are used, they pertain to be bad guys. The researcher also found that children exposed to the sample programmes he analysed were amenable to absorbing an overall style of life or mentality that overstresses individual enjoyment of money, comfort, luxury, health, beauty and fun... at almost any price.

The other illustration comes from a Peruvian analysis of the ideology inculcable through themes and topics systematically promoted by

of the German, French and the British. The B.B.C. from the days of Reith has attempted to maintain some degree of standards even though they were restrictive and stuffy standards. If we through our T.V. are to be culturally colonised it is better that they be through the more cultured B.B.C. programmes than the simplified views of reality that American T.V. represents.

Programming away from dependency

The earlier privately owned TV station had all its programmes bought from the U.S. confirming all the worst views Latin American critics have on TV cultural imperialism. The SLBC Head of Programming Mr. H. M. Goonasekera who is in charge of the new programming has a difficult task in shifting programme content to a non-dependency basis.

Over the last few weeks different strategies have been adopted towards this end. The 7 to 8.30 slot which was earlier bristling with "cowboy-injun" stories has now been fitted with a more cultural content. These information programmes which are largely drawn from the embassies, deal with scientific and cultural matters and do not carry an overt political message. Efforts are now being made also to diversify sources of fiction programmes towards, for example, to the British programmes. The new influx of B.B.C. type films was expected within the next few weeks.

the TV series "The Flintstones". Behind these apparently innocuous cartoon entertainment, Gorki Tapia (1973) detects a pattern of principles and values suggesting that "the only natural course of humanity is capitalism". He notes that consumerism, individualism and competitiveness are thus played up while conformity is suggested as the proper attitude for those who are not among the winners in the competition. This latter, the researcher argues, tends to act as a sort of social vaccination against challenging the status quo that favours the privileges of minorities.

During the last five years or so, several researchers, particularly in the southernmost countries of the region, have concentrated on analyzing the ideological implications of messages contained in popular magazines, especially the "comics".

For instance, Dorfman and Mattelart (1975) analyzed the "latent" or not directly manifest content of the Disney magazine productions, such as that of "Donald Duck". They found these messages systematically portraying a society without a family structure and where the economy is reduced to primary and tertiary sectors. They also found the animal protagonists performing in an underdeveloped world where the only human characters included are backward, silly and dangerous. And, finally, they found the comics to play up leisure time enjoyment and material aspirations as the moving force of society."

TV—INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

In November last year the 20th session of the UNESCO General Conference, in a highly controversial draft declaration, pressed for concrete and practical measures leading to the establishment of a more just and effective Third World Information Order. Many of the crucial sessions at this Conference were chaired by Sri Lanka's C. E. L. Wickremasinghe who co-ordinated and helped to formulate a common Third World stand. The delegates, representing nearly 100 countries, were divided into 4 groups which studied and formulated proposals on various aspects of the International Information Order.

Group 4, which took a strong Third World stand, emphasised in its statement on "Attitudinal and Communication Barriers" that bringing about a New International Economic Order necessarily involved a better dialogue among

MARKET FOR DOMESTIC ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS

Oliver Fernando

Electronic products cover a wide range. My comments are confined to Consumer Electronics and the very limited range that matters to the average consumer in Sri Lanka. Entertainment electronics like radio, cassette radio recorder, Hi Fi equipment are the main products. Calculators, electronic watches and clocks have now entered this market and these are relatively new items to the local consumer. It is expected that these items too will eventually become popular as the price levels fall within the reach of the common man.

Although the consumer and the trade anticipated much from the relaxation of imports, the devaluation of the rupee and the high custom tariffs that were associated with the liberalisation have narrowed the market for these products to a great extent. Many dealers of popular brands of Consumer Electronics expected a boom in sales of Entertainment Electronics. But, beyond the initial rush, results have not been encouraging. A good quality, Music Centre at around Rs. 7,500/-, Hi-Fi Systems around Rs. 12,000/- or Colour TV around Rs. 9,000/- are beyond the reach of the average person in this country. I might assess that the sale of the sophisticated items will be confined to approximately 2 per cent—5 per cent of the country's population.

Radios, radio cassette recorders and small size B/W TV, are within the reach of the common man. Particularly the radio, has a special position in this market as the premier news and entertainment media. It is estimated that the annual demand will continue to be in the region of 100,000 sets. With the regional relay stations that are now set up, medium wave reception is now possible in most parts of the country, resulting in the demand for a second or personal portable set. The market is now building up and it is anticipated that an additional annual demand of 50,000 sets will be reached in the near future. I am pleased to state that the local Electronic Industry is in a comfortable position to meet this demand, with quality comparable to reputed imported sets. In regard to price level a two band battery operated, eight Transistor set which is popular, sells for around Rs. 500/-.

people and nations—in the North and within the North, in the South, and between North and South. It emphasised that such a new dialogue and a New Economic Order could only come about if there was also a New International Information Order and vice versa.

The Group 4 statement on 'Media' commenting on the barriers and how they

Introduction of TV has opened a new field. It is a little premature to comment on what the actual demand for TV will be in Sri Lanka. We have drawn up various estimates, but it is very clear that on price level, the number of colour TV sets that can be sold will be very limited. Black and White sets however will have a better demand as the prices are generally 1/3 that of colour sets. Additional factors that will have a bearing on the sale of a large number of B/W sets will be the licence-fee, quality of programmes and of course the extension of the Transmission as anticipated to cover the whole island.

Assembly or manufacture for the local market is considered not feasible as at present.

The Government we find is very interested in TV as an excellent media to reach the masses and to use TV as a important tool in their development efforts. Reduction of the customs duty to a low rate of 12.5 per cent is a fine encouragement. Although it was suggested that traders are making huge profits; free competition in this trade with so many taking up to TV sales, one can be certain of a good deal.

It has been said the price of TV sets in Sri Lanka are now lower than in Singapore or Hong Kong, the two countries famous for their keen prices. The optimum price level of good quality TV sets including after-sales service will be :

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|---------------|---------------|
| 12 in. B/W | — Rs. 2,000/- |
| 14 in. B/W | — Rs. 2,500/- |
| 18 in. B/W | — Rs. 2,900/- |
| 20 in. B/W | — Rs. 3,200/- |
| 12 in. Colour | — Rs. 6,000/- |
| 14 in. Colour | — Rs. 8,000/- |
| 20 in. Colour | — Rs. 9,000/- |

In view of a patent on the PAL system, screen sizes above 20 inches are made only in Europe.

| | |
|---------------|----------------|
| 22 in. Colour | — Rs. 10,000/- |
| 26 in. Colour | — Rs. 15,000/- |

The problem however in meeting the current demand is that TV manufacturers abroad who cater to the world market, programme their production at least one year in advance. The sudden initial demand from Sri Lanka they are unable to meet within short notice.

could be overcome made the following specific references to TV.

"Developing countries still use a great deal of the packaged television and radio material and programmes from the developed countries. Insufficient effort has been made to produce local programmes, despite the availability of local talent. This applies

MASS MEDIA THE NEW PIED PIPER

By Kazuhiko Goto

Japan is certainly one of the most television-oriented societies in the world. Indeed, in Japan it would probably be easier to track down a missing person than to find a child who does not watch television.

It is easy to see why television is such an attractive medium to both children and adults. It is available in the home and we can watch it in comfort whenever we please; it provides easily digested entertainment after a day's work; it enables us to see places and people and their way of life that we would otherwise be unable to see directly, and it is accessible even to viewers with little education or knowledge.

Unfortunately, television takes up our time; to watch it we must sit in front of it, watch as long as a programme lasts, and do nothing else while watching it. This exclusive aspect of television, the fact that it prevents us from doing other things, poses more serious problems than is commonly realized. While television may provide an acceptable form of relaxation for adults after a day's work, it robs children of the time they must have to accumulate a variety of experiences at first hand.

However, not everything that television offers us is desirable. Even when well-intentioned programmes suitable for children are provided, there is no guarantee that these are the only programmes children will watch. In fact, as matters stand now, children watch more programmes intended for adults than programmes specifically designed for children.

One likely outcome of this will be the elimination of the boundary between the subculture of the adult and the child. Children may come into contact with the adult world too soon, while they are at their most vulnerable. Unless the adult in the home fulfils the role of interpreter and mediator, the children will absorb the view of society, and of adult roles in it, depicted on the screen, rather than the

spontaneous, natural view they would otherwise have obtained from the experiences of daily life.

Furthermore, the models of society, of the roles and occupations of men and women in it, that children will learn will be simplified models adapted to meet the programme producer's need to provide entertainment. Inevitably the adult subculture of the future will be affected.

An important but often overlooked feature of television is that the images and sound it provides, though similar to reality, lack the dimension of interaction and response that we experience in direct contact with the real world and offer only one-way communication. For the child, the parent's response and his interaction with the other children and adults around him are crucial to his comprehension of the world and his insertion into society. The tendency of busy, working parents to use television as a surrogate nurse to occupy the children and to keep them quiet has the effect of depriving them of a factor vital to their proper development.

More important, perhaps, is their effect on reading habits. This type of magazine has been on the market now for several years and many of those who first read them as children continue to read them now that they are adults. It is probably true to say that the increase in the number of children and adults who do not read conventional books is directly related to the spread of comics and of television.

Television, slot-machines, comics—is there a common link between them? As machines or the product of machines and deriving from industrial activity, they form part of the modern mechanical electronic environment which tends to diminish or exclude direct, personal communication between people and to arouse and distort human desires and expectations.

If the present trend for both mother and father to work and to be absent from the home all day continues, our children will become more and more the captives of this artificial indirect, inhuman environment.

Courtesy: UNESCO Courier, March 1979

not merely to new programmes, but even educational and cultural materials. The result is that viewers are being subtly influenced to the norms and values of alien societies, thus making it even more difficult to build up internal confidence and self-reliance".

"In some cases, developed countries offer to help set up TV transmitters and studios on condition that a percentage—sometimes as high as fifty per cent of the material shown should be from the aid-giving source. This practice amounts to cultural neo-colonialism and must be resisted and stopped".

"There is need for greater pooling of knowledge and experience among developing countries regarding indigenous

developments and advances in using the media for development purposes.

POLICIES RELATING TO THE TELEVISION SYSTEM

TV is coming late to Sri Lanka. Since its first introduction in Europe in 1936, television technology has changed quite rapidly. Several competing systems of transmission and receiving have been developed and patented. Black and White Television is increasingly being replaced by colour T.V. Terrestrial transmitting stations are being supplemented or replaced by satellite stations. There-

fore, one of the basic policy decisions that had to be taken was in regard to the T.V. system that was to be set up in Sri Lanka. In this respect the Government decided to go in for the most modern system within its financial means. This decision was taken after examining the experience of several Asian countries that had introduced Television networks of varying degrees of sophistication.

The Government also decided to adopt a system that could give nationwide coverage at once without expanding in stages.

Basically there are three colour TV network systems in operation in the world today. They are:

1. N.T.S. C. System - 1st TV system developed on the recommendation of the National Television System Committee of U.S.A.
2. P.A.L. (Phase Alternating Lines). This reduces colour distortions.
3. S.E.C.A.M. System (Sequential Colour with Memory).

Sri Lanka uses the P.A.L. 625 B system, the setting up of which is costlier than N.T.S.C. but provides a better reception.

Sri Lanka uses the terrestrial system of TV Transmission (not satellites). Considering the small area of the country it was found more economical to use terrestrial transmissions rather than satellites which would give a larger area of coverage which is not required.

The Government TV network will have a main transmitter located at Pidurutalagala. It will also have three small re-transmitters located at Kandy, Vavuniya and Kokuvil (see map).

A TV Production Studio with a capacity to produce programmes for a duration of 5-6 hours, will be located in Colombo and will be connected to the Pidurutalagala Transmitting Station by a microwave link. The studio centre will control and supervise the operation of the Transmitting Station at Pidurutalagala.

For about a period of five years Government Television networks are not expected to earn profits. After this initial phase TV is expected to prove profitable.

Programming

While the transmitter and production studies come as an outright gift from the Government of Japan, the production costs of programmes will

be borne by the Government of Sri Lanka. It is estimated that such production costs may run upto about Rs. 5 million a year but this would depend on the hours of broadcast and the local programme content of such broadcast. Initially Sri Lanka has limited on-the-air TV broadcasts to around 2-3 hours because of the limited capacity of the technical and programming staff.

The long-run objectives of the national TV programmes would be to improve the intellectual and cultural standards of the population. In addition it will be used to bring relevant technological data and knowledge in the field of agriculture, industries, fisheries etc., to the people. Very few TV stations can sustain themselves without going in heavily for advertising revenue. The entertainment potential of TV is of such magnitude that it is very likely that a principal problem of TV production may turn out to be one of striking a proper balance between "educational" programmes and programmes devoted to sheer entertainment.

A basic TV problem in TV programming in the Third World countries has been the inability of these countries to produce sufficient number of local programmes to fill in TV time—with the result that increasingly large numbers of canned films from the West has been used to augment local productions. Films such as *Mission Impossible*, *Kojak*, *Hawaii Five O*, *I Love Lucy*, have been shown with increasing frequency in the Third World TV networks. This is a possibility that has been recognised by the Government although a strict policy decision regarding this matter is yet to be taken. The Private TV networks are likely to depend on imported programme content because of its profitability. In this regard we should have an active policy to encourage local TV production, the first step towards which is the setting up of an extensive TV productions training programme. Training of TV personnel takes a long time and the earlier that attention is paid to this important activity, the better it is for the national TV System.

LABOUR

Plantation Workers and Managers: The Dangers of the Distinction

Sri Lanka could consider itself indeed fortunate in that the conditions of its plantation workers have been the subject of heated debate locally and the focus of international media in the major tea consuming countries such as Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Western Europe, whose governmental and non-governmental agencies now seem to be making concerted efforts to help improve the conditions of our plantation workers. Unfortunately for the workers of those other countries where colonial plantation interests moved in and have settled down, the plight of plantation labour has remained much the same or even, in some cases, worsened. Our last issue of the *Review* made brief references to this situation. In our Special Report on "State Sector Management" we made specific mention of management on the plantations which are very much a part of our State sector today. We emphasized that the ethos and style of management on our plantations may be still heavily pervaded by influences of the British Raj, but this situation was rapidly changing. We added, "Over the last 20 years concurrent with the deep socio-economic changes in the country, there has been a tendency (even before estate nationalization) for the system to change the styles of managers by their adopting a less colonialist outlook". Coincidentally, our Foreign News Review Column reported on what appeared to have become a controversial issue in the British Establishment, namely, "The Underpaid Plantation Workers of Asia". Our reference here was to a despatch from a foreign Press Agency which

quoted Sir Colin Campbell, Chairman of James Finlay & Co., one of Britain's biggest transnational Plantation firms, who was putting up a defence against attacks of his company's attitudes towards the revolting working and living conditions of the workers in some of its estates in Asia and Africa. Maintaining a typically colonialist 'Blimp' stance he told his shareholders, "We go to seek a fortune for our stockholders in many parts of the world and when in Rome, we do as the Romans do". This reference, however, was to the underpaid workers in estates in Bangladesh, India, and Kenya, where the firm's interests are concentrated and his attitude, of course, was "they get what we think they deserve. In this issue we are constrained to carry the debate a step further, as specific incidents of violence have erupted on plantations in Assam. The reputed Indian journal, "*Economic and Political Weekly*" of September 22, 1979 warns of the dangers of this growing violence on Assam's estates. It appears that as a result of the maltreatment of tea plantation "coolies", two estate superintendents have been killed. Naturally, plantation management circles have expressed grave concern and even fears that the interests of India's tea industry could be endangered.

The Indian journal sums up the situations as follows :

In the face of the growing militancy of the workers, the managerial sections seem to have been gripped by a feeling of fear especially those who have come from other parts of the country. This section is often heard
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(from page 17)

complaining about the growing demands of the workers, who they feel are more than adequately provided for. Even today tea-garden managerial staff nostalgically recall British days: they refuse to acknowledge that despite all the tall claims about the better conditions of work and living the actual plight of the tea-garden "coolie" remains pitiable. In contrast, the managerial section, particularly of the upper grades, enjoy lavish perks and privileges. The worker-management relationship hasn't undergone any perceptible change since the British days and today's brown sahibs are as cut off from the life that surrounds them as their white predecessors were. The Indian tea-garden manager desperately tries to fit into the pattern cut out for his British predecessor and indeed many of them are appointed on the basis of 'links' without any knowledge of tea. Hence, the management often displays total lack of understanding and sensitivity towards workers' problems. Wallowing in comforts which are a legacy of British days, the management views every demand of the workers as a conspiracy of political parties. And, with the recognised unions not being able to meet even a fraction of the workers' demands, there has been a growing tendency on the part of certain sections or groups of workers to settle scores with the management on their own.

Sri Lanka's estate labour and management have been saved from this plight largely due to an enlightened trade union leadership and a very positive awareness of the part of successive governments in recent decades and plantation labour is being given its due recognition with more subsidised housing, educational, health and nutritional facilities. Their problems, however, though now brought to light are by no means solved as we shall discuss in a Special Report in an issue of the *Review* in the near future.