

Mettananda: Simplicity and high ideals

HE was an exemplary teacher. A sincere democrat. A great patriot who was fearless in battle. He was also an exemplary Buddhist. It is seldom that all these qualities are found in one man. L. H. Mettananda was one of those rare individuals.

It was not only the people who worked closely with him who saw these good qualities in him. The whole country saw them, and this was because he was a dedicated worker. This was why he was able to lead a forceful movement which aimed at a national revival.

He had five salient qualities. He did not seek personal advancement, nor did he try to accumulate wealth. He did not make irresponsible statements. He did not stand by and watch the destruction of democracy. Teaching was a vocation to him and not just a job.

Mr. Mettananda engaged himself tirelessly in Buddhist activities while he was also a devoted worker for nationalist causes. Even though he did take part in political activities too his services and

this country. He also fought to enlist the assistance and the support of the people in this battle. There were times when these battles became serious.

Weapon of facts

To carry on these battles he had a weapon in his hand. That was the strength to present his ideas without

not a pupil of Mr. Mettananda. But my brother Robert was a pupil of his. While he lived in England, Mr. Mettananda did not in anyway attempt to adopt the ways of that city. He always wanted to, and always lived like a Sinhalese.

This true son of our country formed the *Jatika Baudha Balavegaya* as a step in his fight to free our national culture from foreign influences and to fortify his struggle for nationalism. It was his conviction that without such an organised means there was no way of furthering his ideas and beliefs. His entry into politics was due to the same reasons.

efforts were not directed at obtaining for himself either high position or a seat in Parliament.

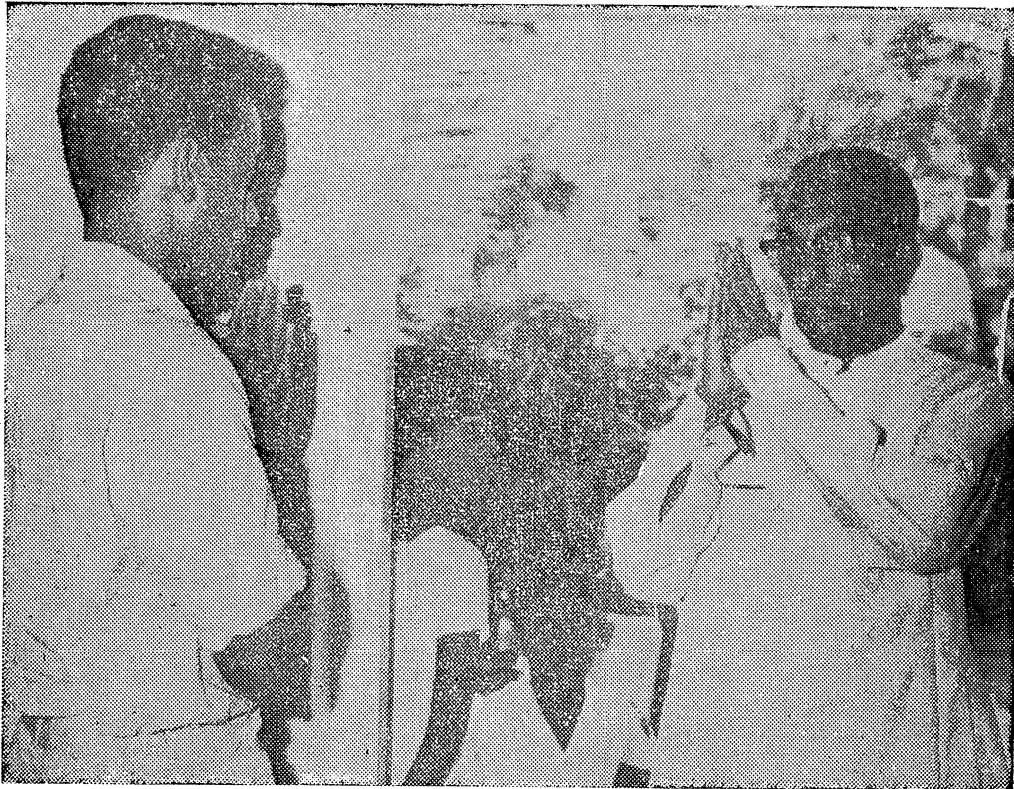
He never sought to be an

By **PHILIP GUNAWARDENA**

(Minister of Industries and Fisheries)

M.P. or a Minister; he never contested a Parliamentary seat nor did he seek election to the Senate. His time was engaged in manifold activities and always he followed the dictates of his heart. He was a man of intellect and combined with his education he

hesitation. That was the weapon of facts. To present his ideas and express his beliefs he always had facts with him. He spoke and wrote always with facts and figures to prove his points. He did not speak because the fancy took him. He did not speak



Yesterday the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Mr. I. M. R. A. Iriyagolle, called at the house of the late Mr. L. H. Mettananda, to pay his respects to the departed Buddhist leader.

could have accumulated wealth and obtained for himself the luxuries of living. But he did not make that choice.

Like a true intellectual, a truly educated man he chose to live a plain life. Both his life and the environment he lived in were simple. He wore the simple banian and cloth and often travelled by bus. In the final period of his life he did not even want to have a telephone at his house.

He did not believe in external embellishments; his aim was to translate his ideas of freedom into fact. It could be said that his whole life was a struggle. This was not confined to his own life alone. It was a struggle to liberate the national culture.

He fought an unceasing battle to strip the foreign veneer of Portuguese, Dutch and English culture that had crept into the culture of

without facts to support his speech. He could very often present the complete history of the point he was making or of the fact he was presenting. This was the basic factor that made him such a warlike speaker—a fiery protector of his causes.

He also had the power of speaking plainly and fearlessly. At a time when no one came forward to talk of nationalism or national culture and the hindrances that stood in the way of these things, Mr. Mettananda spoke out fearlessly. He did not hesitate once—whoever he may have hurt or whoever was at the receiving end of his barbs. He had the unflinching knack of saying what he wanted to say when he wanted to.

His struggles and battles were all based on the foundation of national culture. Every blow that the culture of this country received was met with a blow by him. Even when he was in England he spoke for the national culture of this country with no hesitation. His whole life he lived according to his firm beliefs of what our national culture should be.

Like a Sinhalese

I met Mr. Mettananda in England. Though I am an old boy of Ananda College I was