

METTANANDA ON THE NEW INDUSTRIES

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“The present crisis in this country is one which is both political and economical. From a purely agrarian economy we have, since 1956, endeavoured to form an agrarian cum industrial policy. That the agrarian policies, despite the colossal amount of money spent, have failed is well known. A close analysis of the industrial activities to date reveals a situation which is bound to be even more tragic”. This is stated by Mr L H Mettananda, President of the Baudha Jatika Balavegaya, in the course of a press statement.

Proceeding to give “some examples of the manner in which, in the matter of new industries, the people of this country have been betrayed” Mr Mettananda states:

- * The policies for the establishment of a Petroleum refinery and a Fertiliser factory, which are corner stones for the development of industry and agriculture, have been postponed and shelved for several years whilst politicians wrangle over traders.
- * The Cement factory continues to show profit on paper whilst producing cement at an uneconomic price. The project for the second cement factory and the klinker plant at Galle, which are vital for the housing and construction projects of the country, have also been postponed and shelved for several years whilst politicians wrangle over tenders. The Ceramic Corporation is riddled with Catholic Action and corruption. These facts have already been brought to the notice of the Minister but no action has been taken.
- * For the first time sale had to be imported into the country. The Commission report pinpointed wholesale inefficiency and corruption
- * Sugar continues to be imported at a drain of hundreds of millions in foreign exchange whilst two of the best-equipped sugar factories in the East remain idle for most of the year.
- * Textile queues continue to lengthen. The masses could not even clothe themselves satisfactorily for their New Year festivities while the textile-manufacturing program continues to be bungled both by the private and public sector.
- * The Paranthan Chemical Corporation continues to run at a loss, whilst the Paper Factory, despite schemes of reorganisation costing millions of rupees, has still to produce enough paper for our requirements.
- * The Plywood Corporation continues to manufacture tea chests unacceptable to most of the tea buying countries.

* A successful industry is the Liquor Industry. Gal Oya Gin, Brandy and Rum have become very popular. Kassippu manufacture has become a cottage industry.

Criticising the allocation of new industries to the private sector, Mr. Mettananda states: "A careful scrutiny of the persons who actually control these industries shows how anti-national and anti-Buddhist elements, and particularly those who have purchased their citizenship with big money have got a stranglehold on the industries in this country. For example, the manufacture of textiles to clothe the people of this country has been given almost entirely to registered citizens, distinguished citizens and other anti-nationals. Mr Mettananda criticises the manner in which the private sector manufacture of drugs and pharmaceuticals, plastic goods, hardware, metal products, aluminium ware, sewing machines, razor blades, soap, tooth paste, tooth brushes, and various items of consumer goods in day to day use by the people, have been allocated."

He states "Approved industries in the private sector can be bought and sold in the market place for consideration, and often people who have got certain industrial projects approved sell the approval for a consideration to the highest bidder."

INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

Regarding the first stage of the Ekala Industrial Estate Mr. Mettananda states that of the twenty industries sited there only two are in the hands of the Buddhists.

He asks the Prime Minister to specially investigate the basis of approval given by the Minister for the manufacture of tractors, and the manufacture of paints.

Mr Mettananda also complains that Buddhists have not even been afforded the courtesy of acknowledgment to industrial proposals made by them. He also states "People with no love for this country have been enabled to sent out Millions of rupees on inflated invoices for the machinery and raw materials, royalties and patent rights, and also bring in second hand machinery or reconditioned machinery on new machinery invoices. Cost of production is thus artificially inflated to start with. This corruption is one of the main reasons for the increase in the cost of living and the drain on our foreign assets."

DISCRIMINATION

"Further, in the large majority of these industries, Buddhists have no place. Discrimination against them is rampant. The tie-up not only diplomatic, but also business and financial, with a Western country over flowing with the arrogance of the newly rich money of the postwar years and able to throw its favours and crumbs all around must also be immediately investigated in the best interests of this country."

“It will be very interesting to find out how five Indians (whose names I shall willingly divulge to a Commission of Inquiry) have each obtained approval not for one industry but for a whole series of industries and are fast building five Industrial empires.”

Mr Mettananda requests the Prime Minister to appoint a Commission of Ministry to inquire into “questionable activities” connected with these new industries with a view to overhauling them in the national interest. “It goes without saying those responsible for this sorry state of affairs should be very severely dealt with as they are crimes committed against the people of our country.”