



By Shyamon Jayasinghe

**SYDNEY RIOTS-SOME CONCERNS**

The racial orgy that erupted at Cronulla during mid-December has a lot of sides to it.

The Lebanese community in Australia (Sydney has the largest concentration) is not at all a monolithic group. They have evolved over 160 years and span many denominations including Maronites, Alawis, Shiites, Orthodox Sunnis, and Druze. Lebanese embrace the full range of hair, eye, and skin colour. Most of these people settled into predominantly Arab suburbs usually close to Mosques or churches. Most ethnic groups settle down this way largely to feel comfortable and to maximise the social support network. The downside to this situation is the risk of cultural isolation and chauvinism. Thus, despite their lack of homogeneity they got branded under one label by the wider "Anglo" community in Sydney who tend to perceive in them a threat.

This is a lesson for all ethnic groups. There is a tribalism or "racism" in every one of us but when we opt to live in a country dominated by "Anglos" we must learn to integrate with the latter and to avoid being perceived as a threat to their systems. Pauline Hanson has matured as is evident from her condemnation of both sides that engaged in the violence. "I don't care whether they are White Anglo-Saxon-Celtic Australians or from another country", she said. Yet, she made the point that tolerance is a "two-way street", which is correct. In the necessary process of social integration one may have to drop some elements of the culture that one has been used to in order to fit into the Australian way of life. Living in any society involves a social contract and any contract represents a compromise.

Intertwined with the factor of cultural isolation was the gathering fear of global Muslim terrorism that has served to heighten the perception of threat. The real fact is that in the case of Cronulla there was also an element of youth gangsterism on both sides that had little to do with racism. The racist taunts came largely as a language of abuse employed by one

gang against the other.

**WHEN POWERFUL PERSONS ROB THE COUNTRY**

A report from the Manager Flying Squad of the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), Rubaan Wickremaarachchi, reveals something of how the country is being robbed left and right by persons in high places: The CEB has recovered over Rs.130 million from electricity pirates from May to mid-December. Electricity had been pirated using hooks that bypass CEB metres.

Considering whom the offenders were, my guess is that this figure is a mere tip of a massive iceberg that has been building up over the years in Sri Lanka. Included among the offenders were 10 Provincial Council members, a former Pradeshiya Sabha Chairman, hoteliers, owners of welding plants, garment factory owners, residents and CEB workers themselves among the power pirates. Yet, they all make up to only 1,500 violations! This simply cannot be the real figure of offenders.

One thing is clear and that is that the CEB has been badly managed by successive administrations. We have been told that the Board is losing several billions a day "by providing cheap power". Accordingly, periodic requests have been made for enhancing the tariff. Mr Wickremaarachchi's good work reveals one major source of the billions that the CEB is losing, namely the subsidising of thieves. When powerful people are involved, people like Wickramaarachchi get into trouble. The CEB, like other state commercial organizations has been so thoroughly politicised that the line of command to take bold decisions for the good of the venture has been weakened

This incident thus serves to add weight to other considerations that make one wonder whether these institutions should not be privatised to operate more cost effectively. A truly cost effective operation run on sound commercial lines and supervised by a regulatory body can provide better service to consumers. The myth of the Public Corporation feverishly introduced to the island in the days of the misguided 'socialist era' in Sri Lanka was that the latter would be more people -friendly and that it is important to keep these bodies in public ownership. The act of raising tariffs to compensate for public robbing is not one that is people-friendly. The underwriting of management failure is a heavy burden on the taxpayer and is an opportunity cost on other areas such as farm fertilizer that may justify subsidy. Yet, our ideologically driven socialists demand that these Corporations continue to stay on as parasites.

**The Challenge**

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 Sahan Panagoda Gladston park Vic  
 Tissa Amarasekara Rowille Vic  
 Kumara Ruparighe Epping NSW  
 Ajitha Weerasekara QLD  
 Shehani Alwis Gladston park Vic  
 Manesha Perera Dandenong Vic  
 Sisara Amunugama Paramatta NSW  
 Srinath Jayasekara Millpark Vic

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