

There have been a number of Sri Lankans who introduced humorous epithets and episodes into politics now and again. One such M.P. was Dhanapala Weerasekara who raised the ire of men in and out of parliament by saying that all the buffaloes in his area had been packed off to Parliament. There were the comments by another more respected politician, Dr. N. Perera which, which were even more disturbing. He said Puduma Sattu or strange creatures were entering parliament. This was an obvious reference to an M.P. from a rural electorate in Uva. The most recent invention or innovation is far more interesting and even revealing. I came across this while reading 'The Island' recently. I must thank free lance journalist Milinda Samarasinghe for giving me this term which I value very much as it reveals the pathetic situation Sri Lankan politics has been pushed into. The new term he has coined or introduced into political discourse is 'refugee camp', which speaks a lot about the inevitable feature in the current parliament thanks to dear Junius Jayewardene who introduced this set of creatures along with his

only M.P. who has been in the parliament elected in March 1960 (S.D. Bandaranayake may be the only other surviving politician). That however should be no reason to retain him any further. Now that his son is sure to get elected from Kalutara he can easily pass on the batten to him and retire with all he has

W. M. J. Loku Bandara has been an effective speaker of the House which had a tendency to degenerate to the level of a mad house at times. He has displayed immense capacity to handle delicate situations with patience and a bit of fitting humour, thus reducing the tension among its members. Another reason for his suit-

effort if given the opportunity. There are one or two individuals who fall into this category in the published list, but is that enough, one may ask. Dr. Rajiva Wijesinghe and a former Public Trustee are among the people mentioned. I really do not know about most of them. With the calibre of current day politician entering parliament, one would have welcomed many more. However it is about the dead-

LATEST REFUGEE CAMP IN SRI LANKA

earned politically and otherwise. As for D.M. Jayaratne has he got anything more to offer the country apart from his dream of becoming the Prime Minister. He must be told by someone that all dreams don't necessarily come true.

Then comes another surprise in the name of Anuruddha Ratwatte, indicating an attempt at re-incarnation or resurrection. One has to ask the question as to why this sudden reappearance of a man who has had his day and ought to be resting at home. I cannot think of any useful service this type of man renders to the country - a service any other would do better and more efficiently. Aren't these persons provided with sufficient means to live comfortably in retirement? I think all these men qualify for a handsome pension as retired M.Ps. Why pay them again from the national coffers?

Two persons I would vote for under any circumstance are personally known to me. That maybe the reason I am partial to them. They are both ex-UNPiers, by the name of J. R. P. Suriyapperuma and W. M. J. Loku Bandara. Let me defend my

ability is his judgment as to the correct moment to cross over to the president's party. I consider this to be more a plus factor than a minus one.

We have seen the world cup winning cricket captain entering parliament with a lot of promise and at the end becoming a disgruntled individual with no more to offer the country. Arjuna Ranatunga has proved beyond doubt that being a sportsman one does not make a politician, which calls for skills and temperaments of a different kind. His performance alone should have given sufficient wisdom to the leaders as to the selection of such persons for parliamentary careers. I view the selection of Susanthika Jayasinghe and Sanath Jayasuriya in this light and do not see much promise in their future performances in case they are elected. I wonder why someone could not advise the President as to the desirability of making proper use of such talented sports people in the context of the poor standard of athletics and sports in the country.

These persons should be placed in positions from which they can shape the future of up and coming athletes and sportsmen and women. All their talents will be wasted if they are confined to that august assembly. Luckily they are not in this condemned list, but allowed to try their luck at the election. Let us wish them good luck and wait to see their performance later.

I wonder why another star, this time from the more attractive silver screen is listed in the national list. I will fully endorse Malani Fonseka for any responsible position in keeping with her achievements. Parliament is not a place where she should waste her talents and the vast treasure of experience which she can share with future stars and even novices, giving them a helping hand where necessary and becoming the beacon light for the Sri Lankan film industry, rather than being an embellishment in an otherwise dry parliament. Such national icons are not for display at exhibitions or for the entertainment of men getting used to legislature.

There are a couple of Buddhist monks too in the list, about which I do not wish to comment, although I do not see why they ought to run for parliament. That is a decision the voters have to take, and they have endorsed them once. I was really intrigued to read the name of Sarath Kongahage in the list. Although I have not met him after he took his oaths as a lawyer, I have been following his movements in and out of politics with interest. As far as I see, he is in a fit condition to do something useful in a responsible capacity. He may not contribute in any significant manner to the deliberations in parliament. Being an orator in itself is no qualification to be an M.P. If he really is keen in becoming one he ought to be allowed to try his luck in some place in Kandy. Didn't he once get elected to the Provincial Council from there?

The very purpose of having a national list apparently was to accommodate persons of eminence who are not willing to face the hustle bustle of electioneering, but would like to contribute to the national

wood and the jetsam and flotsam that one worries now, disappointed with the overall result.

Let us hope and pray that this will be the last such list to operate in our motherland. Hopefully the wonderful constitution of His Excellency Jayewardene will at last be reviewed and changed for the better.

THE DAYS ARE NUMBERED

*A tribute to my father on your 84th birthday
(05.02.2010)*

Mr. S. T. Jayasinghe

"I don't think I'd last long"
"Why"? I asked in a quivering tone
"I have a feeling I'll soon be gone"
"Do you"? I queried uneasily
"I don't have the strength any more
No real zest for living as yore
I think my days are numbered"
You finished with a faint smile.
My voice choked with emotion
I measured my words
"We still want you to be around".
You turned to me your
Once handsome face- round and proud
Now thin and sagging
Hearing was vague, so I repeated
You looked at me and smiled
"I know, but there should be an end".
Yes, I agreed reluctantly
"May be we're selfish,
It's against Samsara
The cycle of life and death"
You agreed philosophically, nodding slowly
We waited in that bliss of silence
The time seemed to have stopped
"You don't have regrets or worries
Neglect or need is not your companion"
"Yes I'm lucky I had more than I wished for

I'm blessed with many things".
I was happy to hear that so,
There was contentment.

Finally, that end came many months later.
The unavoidable reality
The dreaded moment
The very end of pain and suffering
One Wednesday at wee hours
The telephone buzzing melancholy
The news from hospital
Was you're gone
With those tears I shed I knew
A vital part of me or us is gone
Never to return
But the memories linger
And that affectionate smile

**Savithri Jayasinghe
Cooray**

Counterpoint

By *The Defector*

novel constitution.

Now to come to the term itself, it is the list of candidates a party nominates as a national list well in advance of an election giving the names of persons who will get places in the new parliament on behalf of their party, depending on the number of places it gets on the declared results.

I was concerned more with the list issued by the governing party which was interesting reading. Moreover I seem to know more about its listed individuals than about opposition candidates. Another reason for my prejudice is that it is this party that will rule the country for some time more, in spite of the predictions by the JVP and the UNP.

Why did Milinda Samarasinghe call this list a refugee camp? I had to grapple with this question before really taking a look at the list itself. I didn't have to look far to be enlightened, for any individual with even a nodding acquaintance with the Sri Lankan situation can see the irony or the funny side of what goes on as national politics in our motherland. One has to accept the fact that the president has to accommodate a few buffons in his list, but he cannot be under such pressure as he was after getting a parliament with a minority in his party. He ought to be in a strong position now, in which he can easily dictate terms. Maybe he does not want to exert his influence too much at the moment. We have to give him that allowance to start with. Having given that I cannot understand the logic of selecting so much deadwood and politicians who have well passed their use-by-date. I refer in particular to people like Ratnasiri Wickramanayake and D.M. Jayaratne, who ought to be enjoying a well-earned holiday by now. Ratnasiri in fact is the



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friend and erstwhile colleague Suriyapperuma first. Having been active across the entire political spectrum, he has turned out to be one of the speakers in demand for any occasion whether it is politics or even literature. A well-read man with a well rounded performance he is still active in spite of his age, Suriyapperuma is a man who could make a meaningful contribution to parliamentary debates and even drive some sense into the heads of errant M.Ps. My other choice