



## YOUNG INVENTORS OF SRI LANKA

What happens to so many young inventors that appear from time to time in Sri Lanka? It is a question one has to raise in view of the apparent disappearance of such persons after they are hailed as heroes.

The most recent inventor of course has been recognized and a scholarship has been offered to him by a university in South Korea.

The young student is from a rural school in the South, who had been supported by his parents by selling a paddy field of someone and half acres, to carry on his research.

While wishing him good luck I want to put my question again, what has happened to so many others who did or claimed to have made an invention?

Not very long ago, there was a story of a young man from a place near Aturugiriya, who was supposed to have invented a method of driving a car with water. Whether such inventions are really worthwhile, I have no knowledge to judge, but I can safely say that whatever new ideas and methods these young men and women come up with, ought to be given serious consideration, and acted upon.

There seems to be no lack of talents among the youth of Sri Lanka, going by the number of instances where they have won competitions in computer programming in the US and other countries.

Such talent ought to be encouraged and promoted with a view to make them remain in

the country and contribute towards its development. This has to be emphasized for a number of reasons. First and foremost is the frustration that could cause them to leave the land of their birth, which has happened over the years. You may think this is just my fantasy, but examples are there for one to see that the problem is far more serious than that.

Almost thirty years ago, I was told by one of my students of an instance where a young and energetic man had found a way to generate electricity using the waves of the sea. He had gone to the most respected Sri Lankan engineer at the time, a man recognized internationally for his inventions. He was eager to know the secret of this new invention and asked the youth to give him all details. It was at that point that the young man felt he was about to be robbed of his findings. He kept the secret to himself, with the result that what could have been a credit to him and the country never saw the light of day.

For the benefit of those who would scoff at the folly of this man, I can relate an experience of my own, which though not an invention, goes to show how bureaucracy and bureaucrats can completely overpower innocent young men and use them for their own ends.

I conducted a research on a local experiment in employee relations at the request of a big shot in a big department, with a colleague of mine, on behalf of my institution. Our report was duly handed over and payment made to the institute. It was only after the report was published in an international magazine that

we learnt it was under the name of the officer concerned. Later it was discovered that not only had he gone to the conference at which he presented the report, but also organized a two year contract for him to serve the organizations as an expert on the subject.

Too good to be believed, but it is the naked truth.



I asked the head of my institute to make a protest, but all heads of institutions were scared of the man.

It is against the background that I stress the need for protection and promotion for new inventors in a land full of such scheming bureaucrats and heads of institutions,

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