



AAUP NEWSLETTER

NEWS FLASH

First ever Graduates' Day at Peradeniya Campus
2nd October, 1999

The Old Days

- A fable for the present

B... stepped out of the bus at Galaha junction, shouldered his camera-case, looked around him cautiously and inched his way along the road.

Three women, middle-aged, sensibly dressed, obviously comfortable with each other, were seated on the low parapet wall by the Arts Theatre.

'Old friends', surmized **B**, observing their body language, 'reliving old times on graduates' day.'

The women studied **B** in silence. **One**, turned away indicating that she had no time for strange young men. **Two** and **Three**, noticed his camera case, giggled infectiously and invited **B** to join them.

'Would you mind answering a few questions?', asked **B**, a little timidly, 'Our readers would like to know something about the old days'.

'The good old days', corrected **One**, sternly.

'The good old days', repeated **B** obligingly, 'was the place always like this?' **B** was not a product of Peradeniya. This was his first visit to the place and he was unashamedly impressed.

One looked around her, at the cob-webs on the walls, at the litter on the

pavements, at the long unkept grass, shuddered delicately but said nothing.

'I loved my room', mused **Two** with a far-away-look in her eyes, 'the view, the space - my room.....'

'Your room?' asked the bewildered **B**, 'but aren't there three to four students in a room?'

'Three to four students crammed into a room originally designed for one person', said **One** somewhat severely.

'The Halls of Residence, the common room, the well-kept gardens, the gymnasium....'

'Yes, Yes', interrupted **B** hastily. **Two** was obviously convinced that she had been present in what was undoubtedly the "hey-day" of Peradeniya, and left uninterrupted would probably carry on for hours on the topic.

'I'd like to hear something about the people. the people you know the dons for instance.'

'The dons,' said **Two** and **Three** with great enthusiasm, 'm.... m...the d-o-n-s!'

'Remember the lean and hungry one who introduced us to the Romantic poets?'

'The Greek God?'

'No the other ... The one with the Oedipus complex'

'And the rather rotund one awfully serious, you know ...' "William of Orange advanced (walks on the podium) William of Orange retreated" (reverses and falls off the podium).

'And the eccentric but charming one, who was convinced that the earth was flat and knew how to prove it'

'The loveable cleric ...' O father - give us Bovanto"

'And the silver - tongued revolutionary, "the nations slipped down the slippery slopes"

'The literary one who reduced D.H. Lawrence's Women in Love, to a series of foot notes'

'The dark and handsome one who whizzed past in an open sports car'

'And all the others ... the young ones who had just returned from the Sorbonne and were into Art and Music and Culture'

The memories followed thick and fast.

One and **Two** inundated **B** in a veritable deluge of hilarity! **B** was amused, not so much at what was actually uttered but at the manner in which they said it, as if they were enumerating the more endearing characteristics of a long extinct species.

One, remained silent; she was definitely not amused.

'Oh yes', she said, 'they had their idiosyncrasies but they were excellent dons... knowledgeable, cultured and articulate ... they had a thorough grasp of their subject and knew how to teach it. The lectures were thought - provokingly and tutorials stimulating.'

'Right,' agreed **B** who had no wish to begin an argument 'Now tell me what you DID..... tell me something about "the camaraderie of like minds, the student pranks, the romances and the assignations".'

'So you've been reading,' observed **One**, looking at **B** with what appeared to be a very small twinkle her eye, 'where do you get your ideas from? Halpe?, De Silva?, Jayatilleke? or Muller??'

'Muller,' admitted **B**, rather sheepishly. 'I read his Sunday column.'

'What would you like us to tell you? asked **Two**.

'Narrate something interesting ... er a strike ..?'

'Strikes,' said **One**, rather contemptuously, 'there were no strikes in our times; there was nothing to strike about!'

'What? exclaimed **B** in surprise, "no issues .. no grievances ... what about the food?'

'The food was excellent - Bacon and eggs, plenty of bread and butter, and tea served in a pot, for breakfast!'

'The administration?'

'You mean the V.C. and the authorities. We were told that he had a foul temper and a colourful vocabulary, but we never met him except on formal occasions, there was no need to'

'Who looked after discipline?'

'The wardens did most of the work and very competently too... there were others, marshalls and of course the moral tutors?'

'Moral tutors?'

'Yes that's what they were called ... senior dons who were expected to keep an eye on the well being of undergraduates'

'Mine was an absolute peach,' said **Two**, 'said he'd hand-picked me as his tutee. He had this party at the end of every term for his crowd... bottles of beer on ice in the bath tubs, stacks of food, loud music and good company. Jokes apart, he was an extraordinary person, very unorthodox but a competent teacher and an excellent moral tutor.'

One looked at her watch, **B** was quick to grasp the hint, time to move on! **One**, **Two** and **Three** waved him on his way and returned to their main business for the day - reliving the best days of their lives!.

B walked on, past the flowering 'golden showers', past the kissing bend where careless undergraduates were known to have fallen off their bikes and kissed the road, past groups of lethargic young men and women dragging their feet listlessly through the lush grass. As he walked, **B** thought of the three women and their memories... 'There must be a moral in that story,' thought **B**, 'there has to be, but why cant I find it?'

AAUP ACTIVITIES

STUDENT WELFARE

1. AAUP Studentships

Under this program this year studentships were disbursed among 45 needy students in different faculties of the University. Out of these, 25 were financed by the Colombo Chapter and 14 are from perpetual awards using permanent grants established over the past period. During the current year, the following funds were added to the Needy Students' Fund.

The Sri Lanka Women's Association (Belgium) has donated Rs. 125,000 to establish four permanent AAUP studentships. Mr. Mahinda Senanayake (AAUP Executive committee member) was instrumental in organising this donation.

Mrs. Patrecia Jayatilleka has donated a sum of Rs. 100,000 for the establishment of the *Prof. K.N. Jayatilleka Memorial Medical Assistance Fund*, under the AAUP Needy Students Fund.

Dr. P. Ramanujam has donated Rs. 30,000.00 to establish the *Mr. D. Ramanujam Studentship* to be awarded to the child of an estate worker. Dr. A.S. Abeyratne (AAUP Executive Committee member) co-ordinated this donation.

Dr. B. Sirisena, Executive Committee Member of the AAUP donated Rs. 30,000/= for the *Mrs. Francis W. Wiesenfeld Studentship*. This studentship will be granted to a visually disabled student at the University of Peradeniya. The studentship was established by Dr. Sirisena to honour the dedicated services of Mrs. Francis W. Wiesenfeld to the visually impaired in Sri

Lanka. As a teacher in the Integrated Education of Visually Handicapped Children Project sponsored by UNICEF and AFOS (American Foundation for the Overseas Blind) she created an environment which made it possible for the visually disabled to participate in all aspects of Sri Lankan society. She worked devotedly to integrate visually handicapped children with normal children, to make it possible for such persons to participate in all aspects of Sri Lankan society, and to make them assets rather than liabilities to their communities. Mrs. Wiesenfeld loves Sri Lanka, visits the country frequently and continues to help the visually impaired and their families as a host parent.

Peradeniya Chemistry Alumni in the United States has donated a further sum of Rs. 55,493.75 to the *Peradeniya Chemistry Graduates' Studentship Fund* which had been established sometime ago.

A perpetual studentship may be set up by a well wisher in memory of a loved one of the donor by donating a minimum sum of Rs. 30,000. The interest obtained from the deposit of this money will be utilised for the purpose specified by the donor through the Needy Students' Fund. It is also possible to give an award for the on going year by donating Rs. 3,000, which will be disbursed straight away. The NSF fund has been granted Approved Charity Status by the Treasury. Donors will be entitled to get the tax exemptions accordingly.

While thanking the donors and facilitators/co-ordinators of the studentships presently available, the AAUP would like to invite members, graduates and well wishers to contribute to the NSF even in a small way.

2. Seminar on Career Guidance

A Seminar on Career Guidance organised by the AAUP (Colombo Chapter) was held on July 3, 1999 at the E.O.E. Pereira Theatre at the Faculty of Engineering. About 450 students, mainly from the Faculties of Arts and Science participated. Prof. B.R.N. Mendis, Director, Career Guidance Unit of the University of Peradeniya, was the Chief Guest. Presentations were made by Mr. T. Thilakasiri, Management Consultant, SLIDA, Mr. Jayantha Jayaratne, Asst. General Manager, Commercial Bank and Mr. D.L. Kumaradasa, Ministry of Samurdhi, Youth Affairs and Sports. The speakers emphasised the fact that 80% of job opportunities are in the private sector and that although jobs are available, qualified personnel are difficult to find. Practical experience and skills outside the subjects offered for the degree were necessary prerequisites in the present job market. The job market now requires skills in communication and data processing as well as a positive attitude. The undergraduates were advised not to think that the Government and Society in general must provide each graduate with a job. It was up to the undergrads to make themselves employable. Mr. Kumaradasa offered practical and very useful advice on the preparation of a c.v. and facing an interview.

A Career Guidance Clinic was held during the afternoon session. This novel concept generated a great deal of interest as the undergraduates moved from one Clinic to another. Resource Persons at the Clinic included Mr. Lalith Athukorale (Bodyline Pvt. Ltd.) Mr. Dian Gunatilleke (John Keells Holdings), Mr. Sarath Jayasuriya (Informatics Group of Companies), Mr. A.G. Mendis (Hayley's Group of Companies), Mr. Palitha Munasinghe (Bank of Ceylon), Mr. Sarath Rajapakse (Ministry of Vocational Training & Rural Industries) and Mr. D.M.P. Sooriyabanadara (DFCC), all of whom expended a great deal of energy in talking to several different groups of students. One resource person expressed the view that the Peradeniya undergrads were unprepared to seek a job and that there was a lack of awareness about employment prospects. There is no doubt that Seminars of this nature are essential and that undergraduates should

be made aware of employer expectations from the first year of entry to the University. The Seminar was sponsored by Commercial Bank, National Development Bank, Central Finance and Bank of Ceylon.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

1. Seminar on Education:

- Vision for the next Millennium.

The Alumni Association University of Peradeniya (AAUP) conducted a Seminar, Education: Vision for the next Millennium, for GCE O/L students from the Kandy district. The Seminar highlighted the need to change the approach to education at school level in order to prepare teachers and students alike, to meet the changes in business, economic, social and professional environments required to meet the challenges of the next Millennium. The aim of the Seminar was to convey a message to teachers and parents as well as students, who have not yet decided on a future career, about the variety of options available in the current job market.

Resource persons who participated in the Seminar included Mr. Lalith Welamedage (Chamber of Commerce), Mr. Wijaya Wickramaratne (President's Counsel), Mr. A.M. Gunaratne (Deputy Surveyor General), Mr. Senaka Wijewardene (Hotel School), Mr. R.B. Herath (Chartered Architect, Urban Development Authority) Mr. W.L.L. Perera (Chartered Accountant), Dr. Rohana Luxman Piyadasa (Mass Media, University of Kelaniya) and Prof. Jayasiri Lankage (Library Science, University of Kelaniya). The resource persons emphasised the fact that students who did not gain entry to the University should not lose hope. There were many other jobs which were equally rewarding and as useful to the nation as the traditional jobs in medicine, engineering and other academic disciplines. The Seminar was sponsored by John Keells Holdings and Singer (Sri Lanka) Private Limited.