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CONDEMN THE APARTHIED  
EDUCATION POLICY OF SRI LANKA

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DISCRIMINATION.....

THE TAMILS STUDENTS IN CEYLON ARE BEING SUPPRESSED BY THE OPPRESSIVE  
SRI LANKA GOVERNMENT'S APARTHIED EDUCATION POLICY.

The attached "OPINION" of the University Teachers of Ceylon and the Memorandum  
issued by the Members of the Jaffna Campus will explain the situation and the plight  
of the Tamil students in Ceylon.

A seminar held at the London School of Economics on the 19th March to condemn  
the APARTHIED EDUCATION POLICY OF SRI LANKA passed the following resolutions.

- 1) We, the Tamil students studying in UK., condemn the apartheid education policy  
of Sri Lanka government and extend our support to those who fight against the  
"standardisation"- an expression of discrimination and oppression - in Ceylon.
- 2) To show our protest against apartheid education policy of Sri Lanka, we resolve to  
stage a one day 'Sit in' in front of the Sri Lanka High Commission on the 11th April.

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EXTEND YOUR SUPPORT AND SHOW YOUR PROTEST. **COME AND JOIN**  
**Us On 11th APRIL, WEDNESDAY. 9am To 5.30pm.**

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**SHOW DOWN... ONE DAY SIT IN**  
**IN FRONT OF THE HIGH COMMISSION.**

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Organised by GUTS- Group to Unite Tamil Students abroad- (CEYLON)

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## FACTS ABOUT THE JAFFNA CAMPUS SCIENCE EXAM

### A Statement from the SCIENCE STUDENTS' UNION, UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA, JAFFNA CAMPUS

The Science Student's Union of the Jaffna Campus met on 17th and 20th November 1978 at an extraordinary general meeting to discuss the statement made by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sri Lanka at a press conference on 10th November regarding the examination results of the Science Faculty of the Jaffna Campus, and decided unanimously to issue the following statement refuting the Vice-Chancellor's claims:

" We the Science Students of the Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka are deeply distressed by the publication of a statement attributed to our Vice-Chancellor concerning the examinations of the Jaffna Campus. This comes in the wake of similar statement made by others in recent weeks and published widely in the press. One gets the impression that these are part of a calculated move aimed at damaging the reputation of our young institution.

The Ceylon Daily News of Monday November 13th 1978 carried a news item on its front page entitled: 'Discrepancies in G.S.O. Tamil scripts marking'. The news referred to a press conference held on the 10th of November at which the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sri Lanka, Prof. P.P.G.L. Siriwardene made some statements about certain discrepancies in the marking of Tamil scripts in the University. The newspaper reported that:

' In the Jaffna Campus, the results of the General Science Qualifying Examination revealed there were only first and second class passes and not a single third class.

This high percentage 'A' passes and the first and second class passes in the Tamil medium indicate discrepancies and this matter will be inquired into, said Prof. P.P.G.L. Siriwardene, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sri Lanka at the press conference on Friday'.

As the Vice-Chancellor did not make any corrections to this statement subsequently, we are compelled to believe that our Vice-Chancellor had in fact made such a statement. As the statement is in many respects erroneous and misleading and lends itself to use by persons with malicious intentions, we have surprised and shocked that the head of a University - a man of learning to whom the whole nation looks up, should have made a statement that is injurious to a section of his institution and casts aspersions on the behaviour of an important and responsible section of his employees. And this was done when he had full and free access to facts.

(1) In the first place, our Vice-Chancellor should have known that there is no such examination called the General Science Qualifying Examination held by the Jaffna Campus.

(2) If ~~instead~~ he referred to the First Examination in Science by this name, he should have known that the Jaffna Campus does not award classes on the performance at the First Examination, be it in Science or Arts. We are not aware of other Campuses in the Island awarding such classes in the first year examination.

(3) The only Science examination for which the Jaffna Campus has so far awarded classes is the General Degree in Science Examination held in 1977. But then this examination was not held in Tamil medium, whereas the Vice-Chancellor has referred to 'First and Second Class passes in the Tamil medium'. If indeed he had referred to the English medium Examination for which all Tamil candidates appeared, one need not elaborate on the possibilities of exploitation by mischief makers to which this vital error of the Vice-Chancellor lends itself. How will the public know that the scripts are there for any non-Tamil examiner to see or that Sinhala examiners were also involved in the assessment of the Tamil candidates?

(4) If the Vice-Chancellor was referring, then, to the General Degree Examination in Science held in the English medium ( and in the Sinhala medium), he should have known that there is no category called "third class" ( in fact, we are not aware of any other Campus of the Island having such category). He was probably referring to the category of ordinary passes, which are usually called "third classes". If he were actually referring to an official category called "third class", he was right when he said that there was not "a single third class". But if he were referring to ordinary passes, he should have known that there were ten Tamil candidates who obtained ordinary passes. Again, we need not elaborate on the use that mischief makers could make of this erroneous statement coming from the most authoritative person on the subject.

(5) Having said all this, he leaves another important matter unsaid. In fact, in our opinion, having left this matter unsaid misleads the reader more than what he said. We refer to the category of failures at this examination. The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the 'high percentage of .... first and second class passes'. We wish he had also drawn attention to the high percentage of failures among the Tamil candidates. 35.6 per cent of the Tamil candidates failed this examination.

Is it small wonder, therefore, that we are shocked at these statements of the Vice-Chancellor. We are young and inexperienced students of the University looking for guidance and example from those who had the good fortune to climb up to the lofty heights of the academic world. We are puzzled as to why the Vice-Chancellor should have made these statements at a specially arranged press conference. ( We are unable to understand how the Vice-Chancellor, who is under the Ministry of Higher Education, was associated with the Minister of Industries & Scientific Affairs, Mr. Cyril Mathew, who arranged the press conference. Was this an instance of Academic people becoming the spokesman of politicians?). Did the Vice-Chancellor not have the facts before him? If so, why did he make such damaging statements without ascertaining the facts, which were there in his own offices for him to call for and peruse? It is seven months since the results were released and he had ample time to investigate into it if he had any suspicions of foul play. In fact he had visited our Campus at least twice during this period. What prompted him to raise this matter at this moment?

Since the Vice-Chancellor or the President of the Jaffna Campus, on whom rests the onus of presenting the facts to the public, have failed to do this for reasons best known to them, we who are at the receiving end of ridicule, humiliation and discrimination as a consequence of the distorted picture presented by the Vice-Chancellor and others regarding the degree awarded by the Jaffna Campus, have been driven to this position of placing the facts to whom it may concern, so that they could view these objectively and come to the right conclusions.

In the first place, we wish to state that so far there has been only one examination held by the Jaffna Campus for the Degree of Bachelor of Science. This was held in 1977. The examination was held in the English and Sinhala media but not in the Tamil medium. Examiners for this were both Sinhalese and Tamils. The scripts were first marked internally and then sent for a second marking to examiners from the other campuses of the University. These examiners were also both Sinhalese and Tamils.

The following are the statistics relating to the examinations under investigation:

Results of the General Degree Examination in Science (Mathematics/Statistics/Economics) held in December 1977

	Tamil	Sinhalese
1. Number of students enrolled for the course	73	30
2. Number of students who sat the Final Examination	62	30
3. Number of students who failed the first or second annual exam and were not allowed to proceed to the Final	11	NIL
4. Number of failures at the 3rd Exam:		
Maths/Stats.	15	04
Economics	NIL	01
5. Number of ordinary passes:		
Maths/Stats.	06	05
Economics	04	01
6. Number of second class (Lower):		
Maths/Stats.	16	10
Economics	01	NIL
7. Number of second class (Upper):		
Maths/Stats.	10	06

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8. Number of First Class:	Economics	01	06
	Maths/Stats.	09	03
	Economics	NIL	NIL

Results as percentage of the number of students who sat the Final Examination according to Communities

	Tamil	Sinhalese
Failures	24.2	16.7
Ordinary passes	16.1	20.0
Second Class (Lower)	27.4	33.3
Second Class (Upper)	17.8	20.0
First Class	14.5	10.0

Results as percentage of the number of students enrolled for the Course in each medium

	Tamil	Sinhalese
Failures	35.6	16.7
Ordinary passes	13.7	20.0
Second Class (Lower)	23.3	33.3
Second Class (Upper)	15.1	20.0
First Class	12.3	10.0

The tables reveal that the percentage of Ordinary passes and Classes is lower for Tamil candidates than for Sinhalese candidates except for First Classes where the percentage is slightly higher for Tamil candidates. It may also be placed on record here that if the Tamil students who entered in 1974 and who should have passed out in 1977 only 64.4 per cent managed to pass the Degree Examination, whereas 83.3 per cent of the Sinhala students who entered in 1974 passed out in 1977.

Although it is alleged that too many First and Second Classes have been awarded, it should be noted that the class levels set for the candidates of our Campus was remarkably higher than those in any of the other Campuses of this island. Unlike in other Campuses, in our campus the students selected for the Special Courses have to sit for General Degree Examination first among the Tamil students out of the 9 First Classes, 5 out of 11 Second Classes (Upper) and 2 out of the 17 Second Classes (Lower) were obtained by students following the Special Courses who, when they pass out with Special Degree Certificates, will not be given the General Degree qualification that they have obtained now. So far none of these Sinhalese students are following the Special Courses. Taking therefore only the General Degree into account only 4 have passed with First Classes, out of which three Sinhalese students and only one is a Tamil.

The examination was only in Mathematics and Statistics except in the case of eight students who also offered Economics. Subjects like Chemistry, Physics, Botany or Zoology were not involved in this examination. This fact is important in viewing the results, as a possibility of scoring very high, even maximum marks, is there in the case of these subjects. It should not be forgotten that this particular batch of Tamil students entered with very good results when the University admissions were subjected to mediawise standardisation.

Having placed these facts here, we would like to deal with the implications of the erroneous statements made by the Vice-Chancellor for us, for the staff of the Jaffna Campus and for the institution as a whole.

(1) In the first place, the statements made by the Vice-Chancellor and others lead one to conclude that those who received Degrees from the Jaffna Campus do not really deserve them and that these degrees cannot be taken on their face value. For any ordinary man who happened to read or hear about these utterances, this will apply not only to one particular batch of graduates but, by extension, to all graduates of the Campus. This will mean that those of us who earn a degree from this Campus after several years of hard work will have to face humiliation and discrimination when we compete with other graduates for jobs. We will be made to suffer for no fault of ours but as a result of statements made by responsible men who did not care to check their facts or to tell the whole truth to the public. One need not go into the many disabilities that we will have to face and the mental agony that we will be suffering from when both serious-minded employers and mischief-makers use these statements. This will not be confined to the shores of this island but will also spread to other countries whose recognition of our degrees will be affected by this.

(2) Perhaps the most serious implication is that resulting from the aspersions cast on the staff of the Science Faculty, which again by extension will apply to the staff of the whole institution (this is no baseless fear, for it seems to have already happened, as for instance, when in a certain Campus some members objected to scripts of the Arts Faculty being sent for second marking to the Jaffna Campus on the grounds that the marking at the latter place is very lenient; and they referred to the Science results to prove this). The integrity of the staff of the Jaffna Campus is being questioned. The integrity of even those staff members of other Campuses who were second examiners for the Jaffna Campus examination is involved here. This is a very serious matter for any academic community who are engaged in a search for truth. We wonder whether the Vice-Chancellor realised the implications of his statement for his own community.

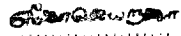
(3) The Jaffna Campus is a young institution and like all young institutions it is struggling to establish itself and earn a name. The staff of the Campus are admirably engaged in the task of achieving this and anyone who cares to visit the place will see for oneself the difficult conditions under which they are doing this. Having seen this, the Secretary to the Ministry of Higher Education has on many a public platform, even when addressing predominantly Sinhalese audiences (as at the Navarangahala in September 1978 when parents of the fresh Arts students were assembled to listen to him) stated that admirable work is being done in this Campus. At a time when the hard work of the pioneers here is beginning to show results, the degrees awarded by this institution are being made to be viewed with suspicion. And this is being done by no other than the one who is the highest authority for the institution - the Vice-Chancellor. It is indeed a shame that the good work of this institution is being rewarded in this manner. Will not the institution become the subject of ridicule? When it is struggling to raise its head, why should it be struck down in this manner? Will not mischief makers use this to ruin the institution? We are aware that the attempts made in this Campus to raise the quality of higher education and the standard of the degrees, especially by emphasising the role of English, have upset many. The fact that the Campus is now attracting more and more qualified personnel is a pointer to the development of this institution. There is no doubt that the graduates from this place will be able to compete with others with equal qualifications. It will not be surprising if there are people in this island who do not like such developments. The Vice-Chancellor has played into their hands and provided them with ammunition to damage the Jaffna Campus.

(4) That the allegations discussed above, coupled as they are with similar allegations against Tamil examiners in the other Campuses, have implications for the Tamil community as a whole goes without saying. We are fully aware that with the partial removal of the standardisation scheme for admission to the University, many feel the need to introduce a scheme that will ensure the admissions of a majority of Sinhala students to the prestigious faculties of Medicine, Engineering and Science. The Vice-Chancellor himself has been suggesting at the press conference mentioned above that the best method would be to ... allot places in the University in relation to the population percentage of the races' (an internationally renowned scientist is talking of races). In order to make a case for increased intake of Sinhala students, we humbly ask, is it necessary to discredit a community? Should a section of the academic community be made the scapegoats for this purpose? Why should a whole community be humiliated in order to help another community?

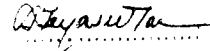
It is for these reasons that we would like the Vice-Chancellor to check the facts again and to issue a corrected statement in his own interests and in the interests of the Jaffna Campus and also he owes a public apology to the Staff and students of the Jaffna Campus.

We are issuing this statement to help clear any misunderstanding that might have been caused in the minds of the public as a consequence of the Vice-Chancellor's statement.

President



Secretary



## Overmarking : Allegations and Attitudes

We feel that some statements which were made at a recent press conference on Advanced Level and University Examinations are likely to encourage people to think along communal lines. The issues raised by this conference are of national importance and we attempt here to make some comments which may help to put the matter in correct perspective.

Examinations now-a-days have become very large operations and a large number of men and women, both Sinhalese and Tamil speaking, are engaged in their conduct. These people are chosen on the basis of their competence and suitability. However, as the number of candidates keeps on increasing the conduct of examinations becomes more complex. The number of persons involved becomes very large and as a consequence the quality of the personnel chosen is not always as high as could be desired. One would therefore expect lapses and even irregularities to occur from time to time. One would also expect the authorities to be ready with methods of locating these lapses and irregularities as and when they arise. They should constantly be on the job of evolving procedures and arrangements to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. So much at least should be standard practice and every examination candidate and citizen is entitled to expect and get this much. Any suggestions therefore that large scale irregularities have been going on unremedied for years would imply that the persons responsible for the conduct of examinations in Sri Lanka are lacking in elementary competence and incapable of learning from year to year. The alternative conclusion would, of course, be that the suggestion is false.

It was alleged at the press conference that a resampling of advanced level scripts showed that about 4000 Tamil scripts had been awarded more marks than the answers deserved and a general impression was created that on the whole Tamil examiners had been dishonest. This obviously is a very serious charge. The allegation and the conclusions drawn from them deserve therefore very close scrutiny. The facts can be established only after a proper inquiry has been held. To establish the conclusion that there had been significant difference in marking standards between the two media, it will be necessary to examine samples of scripts from both media chosen according to carefully devised statistical procedures. It is unfortunate that the press conference at which a matter of this importance was brought up throws no light at all on this very significant aspect. We earnestly hope that the findings of a properly constituted committee or commission of inquiry will be made available to the public as soon as possible. As for individual scripts which were produced at this conference allegedly as samples of over-marking, while no right thinking person would condone proven cases of dishonesty, it is nothing but fair that some other possibilities (misunderstanding of the marking scheme, care-

lessness, incompetence, etc.) should be ruled out before a charge of dishonesty can be established. We need not add that proving the dishonesty of any particular examiner is by no means sufficient to indict a single other person, let alone a whole group, related to the guilty examiner by caste, race or religion. Honesty and competence, surely, are not racially inherited characteristics.

In 1970 there was a similar outburst when it was alleged that the Tamil Medium Mathematics Examiners had been dishonest. The subsequent findings of the official committee of inquiry showed clearly that there had been no significant discrepancy in the marking. Even in the present case we believe that there is evidence to indicate that many of the allegations are baseless, but as we are now pressing for an inquiry by an impartial body, it is not necessary at this stage to go into the nature of this evidence.

Any one with any experience of educational institutions in Sri Lanka would have come across, off and on, persons voicing aloud their impressions that some examiner appeared to be giving more marks than was proper, that some department of study seemed lenient compared to others or that some Faculty or campus tended to be very generous in awarding honours to its students. When such impressions do not—as many of them do—turn out to be entirely fanciful, they are for the most part, attributable to plain incompetence or muddled headed enthusiasm in the formulation of policy. Sober academics see these aberrations for what they are and take steps to minimise their occurrence in the institutions they serve.

It is therefore very sad that men who hold responsible positions should rush to print with explanations on communal bases when dispassionate reflection and a more responsible attitude to facts would have made them realise the alternative possibilities.

As these rumours seem to be associated in the minds of many with the fear, and in some perhaps the hope, that this is all a softening prelude to bringing in standardisation, district quotas, ethnic quotas, etc., etc., it would be useful to look at these devices. Whatever the findings are about any examiner there is no doubt that it would be very unfair to punish candidates for the mistakes, proven or otherwise, of an examiner. Standardisation on a media-wise basis to adjust for the alleged dishonesty or errors of examiners in any medium does just this. A Sinhalese, a Tamil, or a Muslim candidate race but as an individual; he has a right to be treated as an individual. The remedy for over-marking by an examiner is to get the scripts in question re-marked by a more competent examiner, or, where it is the examiner's honesty that is in question, by an honest examiner. Standardisation can be considered a solution to over-marking or under-marking only if it is held that it is not possible in a given medium to get a sufficient number of honest and competent examiners.

It is often claimed that standardisation compensates for lack of facilities. No racial group is homogeneous

with respect to the lack or availability of facilities. Standardisation on a racial basis therefore favours the privileged in one racial group at the expense of the group including the under-privileged in this. Similarly admission on a district or an ethnic quota favours the more privileged in a district or ethnic group. Admission based on ethnic population ratios has, of course, the obvious consequence that it encourages tendencies. Why not, one may well ask, a quota for each caste, creed, etc. In any case to enter a suggestion that ethnic quotas should be the criterion for admission to Universities and other national institutions would be to begin to lose an argument which all minded persons should be loath to lose, for it would amount to an assault on the concept of a united Sri Lanka. Even if, for purposes of argument we were to assume that ratios are brought in, should not the relevant ratios pertaining to the number from each group at the particular examination?

Admission to institutions which claim to be based on merit. If it is to be based on merit, we can envisage many reasons why one should not be admitted to an institution. It is not fair to say that merit cannot be judged by examination marks and that some adjustment must be made for local conditions. The only valid procedure is to identify the objective basis before the examination in which facilities are below standard. At the same time, the nature of the adjustment to be made also should be decided. The present practice of deciding each year the examination on the mixture of devices to be used is obnoxious. A large number of students are treading what path they would be from the year brew each year brings.

The secrecy which surrounds the method used in processing of marks and the devices employed to a large extent to keep the various slices for admission on different bases undesirable. This secrecy can only lead to abuses of the utmost importance in ensuring fairness to all. It is a matter of dates that all procedures should be made public and all relevant documents should be available for examination by a competent committee appointed by Parliament. When the University conducted its entrance examination the Senate Member could examine, with the permission of the Vice-Chancellor, whether selection had been according to the rules. We know several cases where the mistakes of officials were corrected because this was available.

In the meantime every effort must be made by the Government to upgrade rapidly at least a few select districts and also to provide more numerous and generous scholarships to enable deserving students to attend sub-standard schools to benefit from the facilities available elsewhere.

It is also to be urged that authorities concerned with the examination and selection to the University or any other institution should seriously address themselves to the problem of evolving valid and objective methods of achievement, intelligence and aptitude.

It is to be hoped that with the accent on district development and the establishment of regional institutes of learning, opportunities both for higher education and for jobs will increase significantly. Performance at higher examinations will then cease to have the crucial importance it does today and the youth of this country may feel secure that their motherland will offer them fair and varied opportunities for a richer and fuller life.

Let us conclude by drawing the reader's attention to the main points:

- (1) Authorities concerned with the conduct of examinations should be ever vigilant to detect irregularities and be ready with methods of combating them. They should refrain from making without proper inquiry, directly or indirectly, suggestions which are misleading.
- (2) There is a need for an impartial and representative committee to inquire into all allegations of examination malpractices against individual examiners and to investigate whether there has been a significant discrepancy in marking standards in the various media.
- (3) A Standing Committee of Parliament should be formed with powers to verify whether admissions to Universities and other national institutions have been in accordance with the procedures laid down.
- (4) Admissions based on district and racial quotas favour the more privileged in the favoured group.
- (5) At least two schools training students to Advanced Level should be established in each of the less developed districts. Increased and more generous scholarships should be granted to the brighter students to pursue studies in the better schools in the districts.

University of Sri Lanka,

7th December 1978.

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# Overmarking: Allegations and Attitudes

Comments by  
 Some University Teachers