

A RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT

[Address to Annual Session of S. L. F. P. in 1958] March 1-2

We are meeting today at this ancient and historic place—Kelaniya, which is hallowed by so many memories that are dear to our people. This is one of the places visited by the Buddha on a mission of peace. It is also remembered by the name of Vihara Maha Devi, whose courage and patriotism not only helped in saving the people of Kelaniya from disaster but who was also the mother and inspirer of the hero King Dutugemunu.

As our Party also happens to be the Government Party, I do not think it would be out of place for me to refer at this Party Session to the work of the Government in the past year. There is no doubt that the last year was one of considerable difficulty in various directions. The breach between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities of the country had widened to such an extent that the Federal Party, with the support of a large section of the Tamil community, had made all arrangements to launch a so-called Satyagraha Movement last August. If this had, in fact, taken place, not only in the northern and eastern provinces but in various other parts of the country serious troubles would have arisen, many people would have suffered, various economic problems would have been gravely aggravated, and goodwill and amity between the Sinhalese and Tamils destroyed for many years to come. Happily, this misfortune was averted. In the discussions which the leaders of the Federal Party had with me an honourable solution was reached. Regarding the language issue, while Sinhalese will be the only official language of the country, recognition will be accorded to the reasonable use of the Tamil language. You will remember that this was the policy stated by us in our Manifesto before the General Elections, and is a position repeated by me when I moved the Sinhala Only Bill in Parliament. Regarding the claim for a Federal Government, it has been decided that the country should continue under one Government as hitherto, but that decentralisation at the administrative level could take place through Regional Councils. Here, too, you will remember that we have always stood for the establishment of Regional Councils. When the Bills regarding these two matters are prepared, the public will be able to see the detailed provisions for themselves and I can

assure you that various fears and doubts that have been expressed in certain quarters will be found to be unwarranted.

The campaign which certain small elements of the Sinhalese started after my discussions with the Federal Party with the object of creating trouble and embarrassing the Government, as you all know, proved an ignominious failure. You will thus see that communal harmony has been restored to a great extent with honour and self-respect. Such harmony and friendship is absolutely necessary if we are to solve the grave economic problems that face our country.

The dislocations caused by the Suez crisis had a number of adverse economic repercussions on us. There were delays in regard to both our imports as well as exports which are a serious matter for a country like ours whose economy at present is very much an import-export economy.

There was a certain amount of unrest in the labour sphere both in the public sector and the private sector and a number of strikes took place. These were all dealt with in a spirit of patience and understanding and no serious occurrence took place.

Towards the end of 1957 we suffered from a serious flood disaster. The immediate problems that arose from this disaster were dealt with to general satisfaction and we are now grappling with the problems of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Meanwhile, to add to our other difficulties, our opponents, in whatever sphere and whatever way they were able, have been carrying on a ceaseless campaign against us. That section of the Press which is opposed to this Government, our political opponents, various disgruntled and frustrated elements, vested interests that harbour various fears, and even so-called astrologers, engage merrily in this game, and like the witches in "Macbeth" dance round the hellish cauldron chanting their words of black magic—

'Double, double toil and trouble
Fire burn; and cauldron bubble'.

The purpose presumably is, on the one hand to prevent the Government settling down to tasks of economic development and other measures of progress, and on the other, to create in the public mind a feeling of dissatisfaction and

doubt. However, all these manoeuvres have not proved of much success and I, for one, feel that, if they have the effect of keeping the Government on its toes and alert, some useful purpose may be served even by such mischievous manoeuvres as these.

In spite of all these difficulties, I can claim, with a certain amount of pardonable pride, that our record of achievement has also been fairly satisfactory. In Foreign Affairs, we have established friendly relations with many countries and have concluded advantageous Cultural, Trade and Economic Aid Agreements with many of them. We have gained the regard of all countries, whatever be their ideologies, as was shown by the ready assistance rendered to us in the recent flood disaster. We have taken over the Bases of Trincomalee and Katunayake by friendly arrangement with the British Government. This step has not only completed our freedom but has secured for us certain economic advantages by making available the harbour of Trincomalee to civilian shipping and the airport of Katunayake for the use of civilian planes.

A Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament has been appointed to consider necessary amendments to the Constitution. A Bill is being prepared for the implementation of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Election law.

In Agriculture, the passing of the Paddy Lands Bill will benefit many lakhs of our peasantry and might well be claimed as the Peasants' Charter.

In Land and Land Development, many schemes of irrigation works are in hand and others will be taken up early which, when completed, will to a great extent solve the problem of landlessness. A Bill has been introduced to prevent the fragmentation of estates.

In Industries, there is provision in this year's Budget for such important industries as textiles, sugar, salt, fisheries, ilmenite, etc., which will provide a sound basis for the efficient industrialisation of the country. Greater attention is also being paid to cottage industries.

Steps are being taken to improve the postal services and the establishment of sub-post offices and the reorganization of the Information Department and Radio Ceylon.

Steps have been taken to set up machinery for the implementation of the Kandyan Peasantry Commission.

In Labour, various repressible Public Service Regulations have been repealed, various amendments introduced to labour laws, and it has been decided to repeal the Stay-in Strikes Act. The Bill for a National Provident Fund is now before Parliament and, I hope, will soon be passed. We sent an officer to India to discuss with the Indian authorities the question of reform of the Public Services, and his report will receive consideration by the Cabinet early.

The Planning Machinery is now at full work and we will have the assistance of various experts from abroad with an international reputation in the preparation of a National Plan of Economic Development.

The bus services have been nationalised, the port will be nationalised very early and other schemes of nationalisation required for the economic progress of the country will be undertaken. Steps are being taken to explore sources of hydro-electric power in this country, and provision has also been made for the improvement of existing roads and for the taking over of a large number of new roads by the P.W.D.

A Committee has been set up to make recommendations for the establishment of a Sasana Council and its report is expected early. Greatly increased grants are given to pirivenas and Sunday Schools for the teaching of religion. The Bills to raise the status of certain pirivenas to that of a University are ready and will be introduced very early. A Commission has been appointed to report on the University of Ceylon. In the educational sphere, emphasis is being given to the teaching of science subjects and technical training which are so necessary for the economic advancement of the country, and for the first time H.S.C. classes have been started in the Swabasha medium.

In Health, various steps have been taken both to improve Ayurveda and to step up the rest of the health services both on the preventive side as well as the curative side.

Regarding bribery and corruption, as the present machinery is unsatisfactory, a new Bill is being drafted to deal with this subject more effectively and efficiently.

A Bill has been passed in Parliament to set up machinery, particularly in our rural areas, for Conciliation, which will be a great help to the people who now have to indulge in litigation in Courts, sometimes at great expense.

It will thus be seen that, although a great deal of work remains to be done, the Government has done many things in the past year which the country can consider reasonably satisfactory. It will also be seen that most of the Resolutions passed at our Session last year have already been implemented.

I cannot refrain from commenting on a recent article by Mr. Patrick Gordon-Walker. Mr. Gordon-Walker is a good friend of mine. Presumably, judging by his own standard, he seems to think that I am a Democrat and a Liberal (rather than a Socialist). He himself, if I may say so, is nothing more than an armchair Radical Liberal, who, having no place in the Liberal Party, which is almost extinct, hangs on to the Labour Party, though he does not appear to cut much ice in that Party either. I cannot refrain from deploring the tendency of certain British politicians to express patronising views on the politics and politicians of some of our countries. They apparently cannot forget that we were at one time their colonies and think that this gives them a right to patronise us in this way. I think it would be in the interests of the friendly relations between Britain and some of our countries if British politicians restrained themselves from indulging in this type of action. But there is one point in his article which deserves careful attention. He says "The future stability of democracy in Ceylon depends upon a continued leftward trend in politics". I would recommend this statement for the careful study of some of our so-called political pundits who are so afraid that the leftward trends of the present Government might lead us to Communism. They seem to have no objection to our being a Democratic Socialist Party provided only that there is no socialism about it. In passing, I wish to observe the tendency of every Party today to call itself socialist.

There are important Resolutions to be moved at this Session. I do not wish, at this stage, to comment on them in detail as those who speak on the Resolutions will do so. Originally, it was our intention, like last year, to move Resolutions regarding the various activities of Government to enable all the Ministers to give explanations. But the Resolutions Committee came to the conclusion that this was not possible within the time we have for our Session and decided on the Resolutions that are before you. There is an important Resolution re-stating the policy of our Party. This has become necessary because some little confusion seems to have arisen lately on this subject. There

is another Resolution for the appointment of a Sub-Committee of our Party in consultation with members of the Government Party who are not members of the S. L. F. P., to draw up a programme for the next three years in conformity with our policy. When this is done, I trust that a certain amount of confusion that now exists in the minds of the public, as well as certain sections of our own Party as well as the Government Party in Parliament, will disappear. Other Resolutions deal with Foreign Affairs, the Indian Question, and the Cost of Living. There is also an important Resolution regarding the reorganisation of our Party.

Our opponents, having tried unsuccessfully various methods of discrediting our Government, now seem to be attempting a campaign to divide the Government against itself—to show that there are differences between S. L. F. P. members and those members of the Government who do not belong to our Party, as well as differences within the S. L. F. P. itself. In every way, attempts are made by exaggeration, distortion, and misrepresentation, to spotlight these differences and to try and bring about a break-up of the Government from within. We must be very alert to this campaign that is proceeding and be very careful not to allow it to succeed. It will, indeed, be a tragedy if, having successfully overcome opposition and difficulties from outside, we were to succumb to a campaign calculated to create internal disruption within our own ranks. Let us remember that the people of this country, with courage and determination, overthrew a reactionary regime and reposed confidence in us by electing us to power. We must never forget the responsibility we owe to the people of the country. It is our sacred duty to stabilise and strengthen the victory which the people have gained and of which we are the trustees so that no occasion may arise in the future for the people to say that owing to our own differences and weaknesses we have betrayed them. Even in regards to our Session on this occasion, many of our opponents are waiting with keen anticipation in the hope that sharp quarrels and differences will arise at this Session itself. I appeal to all of you, in the conduct of the business of this Session, to display that restraint and dignity and unity which is necessary to strengthen the confidence of the people in us and to enable us to perform effectively the grave tasks on behalf of the country which the people have entrusted to us. It is necessary for each one of us, whether it be an ordinary member of the Party or a Member of Parliament,

or a Minister, or Prime Minister, to address ourselves to the tasks that face us with a sense of devotion, and even dedication, with a spirit of humility, service and sacrifice. In this way alone shall we be able to discharge effectively and efficiently the grave tasks entrusted to us by the people and win for ourselves the gratitude not only of the present generation but of generations to come.

In this spirit let us address ourselves not only to the work of this Session but the work that faces us in the coming year, both in our Party and in the Government of our country.