

We must campaign against the Economic Hardship and the War

Monday 17 March 2008, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 24 February 2008).

The demonstration and the public meeting by the Movement against the Media Suppression held in Colombo last week, was a success. There were around thousand protesters from media, trade unions and mass organizations.

Bala Thampo and the CMU, Bank Employees Union, Saman and the Independent Trade union Centre participated with the United Federation of Labour and the Government United Federation of Labour, the two federations associated with the Left Front. The presidential candidate of the Left Front , Chamil Jayaneththi also participated.

The demonstration started near the De Mel Park, Slave Island and marched unto Colombo town hall and held the meeting at the Jayewardene centre. Support given to this event shows that even the masses who accept the government appeal, that it is not a time to cry hunger and hard ship when there is a war, are concerned about media repression.

They may grudgingly support the war effort of the government but they certainly want to know the truth. The government may not be able to stop the spiraling cost of living but people want to know the truth about the socio political situation. They want to know who are responsible for corruption, extravagance, thuggery and plunder.

Media men and media centres are attacked not so much for campaigning against the war, but for exposing the culprits. Not only the poor who are complaining about the worsening economic situation, but also the rich.

Ashwin of Lakkbimanews quoting from the interim report of the Hemas Holdings limited, a company with investments in many sectors of the economy, said that the report identified the status in the country as none conducive period for businesses while looking forward for improvements during the coming months.

Even the Minister Champika has recently declared that the ministry needed 10 million per year for the management of wild elephants and is unable to carry out the work with the meager Rs 3 million they currently receive. So the economic hard ship is the main cause of human - elephant conflict too!

Social unrest is correlated to the increase in robbery, theft and fraud. Gayan of Sunday Lakkbima says that according to police reports there is rapid increase in this type of crimes in the recent period. Cause is identified as the economic hard ship.

Unofficial police reports indicate that in the month of January and up to 15th of February, over 5000 robberies and house breaking have taken place. Police accepts that many such crimes are unreported.

Still, according to official reports, in the first 9 months of the year 2007 there were 14232 major house breaking and robberies. Most of these have taken place in urban areas and such crimes are

increasing much faster than all other types of crimes.

This volatile situation can feed any aggressive political campaign. If the left trade union movement does not take the campaign against economic hardship and for a political solution to the Tamil national problem forward, the JVP will take the mass unrest to buttress their Sinhala chauvinist uprising.

The JVP, as usual, has turned to its base in the universities. They start agitations against privatization of university education only to attract students towards their racist politics.

If they are genuine then they should keep the agitation against the ill effects of global capitalism, alive all times. So far they supported Mahinda's regime to the hilt in spite of its pro global capitalist agenda. Now they are intervening, with the coming anti devolution campaigns in mind.

Shyamajith of Lankadeewu reports "Violence in the university has now turned into a social issue and it has been claimed that party politics was the main reason for unrest in the universities. Obviously there are a number of student political unions backed by political parties and these student political parties unfortunately clash with their colleagues within the university."

This observation is very correct. These clashes are only forerunners of what is to come. It will be more serious than 1987/90 period when the JVP terror was directed at those who stood for equality and autonomy for Tamil speaking people.

As long as Mahinda is engaged in the war and no new directions are given to the armed forces, JVP as a war mongering party should support him in spite of inflation or corruption.

If this situation continues without Mahinda yielding to Hanuman of Indraprastha, then JVP will lose its radical social base very rapidly. Unfortunately Mahinda will eventually yield to his masters to take up the challenge of mass unrest.