

## PRIZE DAY 1984

### **Speech/Report of Headmaster Mr. Patrick Gunawardena**

The Honourable Minister of Finance and Planning, Mr. Ronnie De Mel, Members of the Board of Governors, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a privilege to have with us today one of the most illustrious Old Boys of our parent school at Mount Lavinia.

I remember, when I was at S. Thomas' at Prize Givings like this, a stoutly built teenager going up to the platform time and again to receive many of the most coveted prizes. Little did those present realize that young de Mel was to be the future Minister of Finance, and a brilliant one at that, who pulled the country out of the economic morass it had fallen into 8 years ago.

We congratulate you on breaking a record by presenting your 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive Budget ..... one that has earned magnificent tributes from every quarter.

Our Chief Guest is a truly first class product of a first class school and had a first class academic record, which you boys should take note of, and try to emulate. I am emphasizing to word FIRST because he was placed first in every public examination he sat for.

He came first in Sri Lanka in the London Matriculation and first in Asia in the London Intermediate Examination in Arts, and again at the University of Ceylon in 1947 he graduated with a First Class Honors Degree in History. He was a very voracious reader steeped in Classical learning.

He crowned his brilliant academic career by winning the English University Scholarship for Post Graduate studies at a British University. He was admitted to the University of Cambridge where he read for a Doctorate in Philosophy choosing as his special field of study "International Finance and International Trade."

He passed out First in the Ceylon Civil Service Examination and had a very distinguished record as a Government Agent in several provinces, a Secretary in several Ministries and the Head of several Government Departments.

Our country today looks for political leadership of the highest quality and we are glad that we have in you a dominant personality in the Cabinet who can

contribute and has contributed immeasurably to the political and economic needs of our people.

Your presence here today is an honour to us and an inspiration to our boys. By bringing distinguished Old Boys of S. Thomas' College of your calibre we want our boys to realize what a great school our parent school is. At S.T.C. we teach our boys to respect and value the best in everyone and also to venerate the noblest personalities in every sphere of life.

And now let me welcome Mrs. De Mel who has so graciously consented to be present today. It is indeed a historic occasion to have a Minister's wife distribute the prizes.

Mrs. De Mel is no stranger to S. Thomas'. She belongs to a very wealthy and distinguished family which had a close association with S. Thomas'.

Her father, the late Mr. Leo Fernando, was a benefactor of S.T.C. Mount Lavinia who gifted a whole block of class rooms to the College.

She has made herself an unobtrusive companion to her husband by being a most valuable partner supporting him in his work in his electorates in which they have served together. With great charm and dignity she carries out the manifold demands made on her.

We owe you special thanks for so graciously consenting to give away the prizes, and trophies.

We are glad to welcome the members of the Board of Governors who are with us today and we appreciate their devoted interest in the affairs of our school. The progress and welfare of the school is their concern and under their wise and capable guidance the school has gone on from strength to strength.

To our parents, Old Boys and friends who are with us today we extend a warm welcome. Your lively interest and active co-operation in the affairs of our school are a source of great encouragement and strength to us all.

We say a special word of thanks to those Old Boys who so generously donated prizes year after year. Especially Mr. Ravi Samaraweera who has donated this year a very handsome trophy to be awarded to the Champion Athlete of the year.

A special word of thanks is due to our Manager, Mr. Gerald de Alwis and our Assistant Manager, Mr. Leslie Habaragoda for the advice and assistance they gave me whenever I needed it.

Honoured Sir, you have an intimate knowledge of S. Thomas' and its sister schools, and are always willing to show a sympathetic understanding of the problems and needs of private Schools. At a time when we were groaning under the imposition of a Business Turn-over Tax, and it was brought to your notice, you exempted us from it. We are deeply indebted to you for your help at all times.

### **THE NEED FOR MORE STATE ASSISTANCE**

I would invite you, Honoured Sir, as an important Minister of the Cabinet, to see the state of the old buildings and dormitories erected 40 years ago during the time of Dr. R. L. Hayman, and to inquire about the large financial commitment the school has to make annually to meet the cost of renovating and maintaining them and also constructing new buildings, the cost of which has risen so steeply in recent years.

Our school also appears to be on the "hit list" of important state institutions, particularly in the matter of the levy of an exorbitant Fuel Adjustment Charge for Electricity supply to the buildings in this sprawling 48 acre campus which amounts to about Rs. 18,000/- per month and also the levy of an unconscionably high tariff rate for our water supply from Ohiya which has reached a staggering Rs.8,000/- per month in spite of supplementing our water needs with our own internal supply system.

For the bulk of our water consumption we are charged at the rate of Rs. 5.50 per 1000 liters which means that the school pays about Rs.3/- every time a boarder takes a shower bath, and we have over 725 boarders.

We do not expect total exemption from payment for these essential services. Our only request is that traditional educational institutions such as ours which are Private Fee-Levying Schools should not be classified as profit making business institutions and should therefore have a more reasonable or specially reduced tariff rates imposed on them for water and electricity supplies.

The aim of our school is to offer places to boys from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. This has been achieved over the years through a very generous provision of free education to sons of all its employees, special reduction of fees and scholarships and bursaries to deserving students.

During the outbreak of communal violence at the end of last year nearly 125 Tamil boys whose homes and parents' places of business were destroyed, were provided with free tuition and free boarding from July to December which cost the school nearly Rs.200,000/-.

It seems likely that if some sort of financial relationship with the Government through State Aid is not forthcoming in future fewer free places will be available, especially at a time when Staff salary increases have been provided for in your recent budget, which is applauded by all of us who are teachers and who are the poorest paid yet most hard worked profession in our country.

In order to meet the increased salaries bill we are compelled to jack up our fees, and there is limit to which we could do so without evoking strong parental protests.

Raising our fees would in effect make S. Thomas' college an institution open increasingly to financial elite, a situation which all of us here today, I am certain, would deplore.

Shortage of funds will inevitable lead to a lowering of the quality of education, for a good education, let alone an excellent education comes at a very high price.

It is at our peril, that is this country's peril, to reduce the status and functioning of Private Fee Levying schools like ours that aim at excellence in academic standards, sports, discipline and character building.

## **Speech of Chief Guest Hon. Ronnie de Mel, Minister of Finance & Planning**

Mr. Patrick Gunawardene, Mrs. Gunawardene, Members of the Board of Governors, member of the staff, distinguished Old Boys, Parents, Boys and Girls of S. Thomas'. What a vast change there is from my time. There are even girls at S. Thomas' now.

I consider it an honour to be your Chief Guest on this very special day in the life of your school. Though an Old Thomian myself I am unfortunately not an old boy of Gurutalawa. I belong to the older establishment at Mt. Lavinia, I sometimes regret the fact that I missed the wonderful opportunity of spending at least some part of my early life in such pleasant surroundings and in such a salubrious climate as all of you have here in Gurutalawa. I am sure I missed something by not attending school here. I could certainly have made amends if I had been able to produce a Thomian, but unfortunately I did not get enough cooperation in this matter from my better half, and I produced only three Bishop's College girls instead. My mind goes back today to the year 1942 which was my last year in school.

I chose this year 1942 for many reasons because there are many similarities with the year 1984 and our present times. 1942 was also a year of crisis in the history of our land. Just as much as the year 1984 is a year of crisis in our land. There are many similarities between that year which was my last year in school and this year in which I am presiding at your Prize Giving. In 1942 when we were in school in Mt. Lavinia, Colombo was bombed by the Japanese. A Japanese plane crashed on our college Cricket field near what we call the old Botany Lab; 2 died. The threat of a Japanese invasion loomed large in the land and people began leaving Colombo. Schools closed, schools were evacuated. S. Thomas' was shifted to Kandy first and then later to Gurutalawa. I went to Kandy and it is thus that I never had the privilege of being an Old Boy of Gurutalawa. I remember this year 1942 when all this occurred. It was a great year in the history of our school. In 1942 when all this crisis occurred there was no panic at all at S. Thomas' Mount Lavinia. There was no mass hysteria. No shouting and wailing and beating of breasts, there was no histrionics. We had no T. V. then, little radio and there was little opportunity for the type of the mass histrionics that we have today. A sense of strong discipline prevailed. A spirit of excellence reigned in our school. There was a sturdy independence and absolute communal harmony and peace. They were the hall marks of S.T.C. then. I hope they are the hall mark of S.T.C. whether at Mt. Lavinia, or whether at Gurutalawa or at Kollupitiya or at Bandarawela even now. While the war went on, while the threat of invasion loomed large over the land, while foreign troops from the Commonwealth and other countries by their hundreds of thousands came into the land, while Colombo was almost a complete fortress, while a complete 'black out' engulfed the entire country. I am glad to say that S. Thomas' produced despite all these

difficulties one of the best generations of Thomians ever in the 133 year old history of the school. I can vouch for it.

I will tell you something of that generation that the school produced during this year of crisis, 1942, it produced 4 members of the old Ceylon Civil Service, which was the aim of every boy at that period; it was the plum of the academic world and of the official world then, including 3 who came first in their exam in their particulars year. I think a record of which any school could have been proud, at that time. It produced 1 English University Scholar, it produced 2 vice-Chancellors of the University of Sri Lanka, it produced members of the Diplomatic corps, professors, lecturers, Head of Departments, Secretaries of Ministries, doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Businessmen, Planters, one All Ceylon Cricket Captain, several All Ceylon Athletes and Swimmers - all in all I think when we came to Mt. Lavinia. When we had a crisis in the history of our land, a crisis when Sri Lanka was threatened by invasion, S. Thomas' still managed despite all the dislocation to produce one of the best generations of Thomians in the whole history of the school only to prove what a great school it was despite all the difficulties around it. I think your own headmaster just missed that distinction, because he left school the year before to join the University. In that particular year 1942 I think we beat every school in academic studies when a record number of 1<sup>st</sup> Divisions in the London Matriculation Examination including the boy who came first in the entire Island. We beat every school in games, except in Tennis, where we lost convincingly to Royal - I think probably because I played in that team. Such was the spirit of excellence the school displayed during those difficult days. It was certainly the 'Best School of All' then.

I hope it is the best school of all even today. As for discipline Warden de Saram maintained the highest standards at all times. We some times rebelled against it, but now we know the value of it. Even the Captain of Cricket or even the boy who came first in the entire island in the London Matriculation, could be sent home if he transgressed the limits of discipline which was set for the school. No exemptions were made; standards were so high. Today unfortunately we witness the decline of discipline and the reign of mediocrity in many areas of public life in our land.

The high sense of discipline and the spirit of excellence that then prevailed have certainly declined. I think that S. Thomas' whether at Mt. Lavinia or at Gurutalawa or in Kollupitiya or in Bandarawela, anything that bears the name of S.T.C. still remains like a little oasis in a large desert. Dr. Hayman and Father Foster, my revered teachers, who built Gurutalawa, and nurtured it to its present standards of excellence, then taught us at Mt. Lavinia. Father Foster taught me History. He first inculcated in me a love for history and the historical tradition. That probably accounts for the reason as to why despite all the efforts of Warden

de Saram to make me a classical scholar, the efforts of others to make me a scholar in Economics or in English I ended up with a degree in history.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Father Foster. Dr. Hayman tried his best to teach me applied mathematics but certainly he could not make me a mathematician. He tried hard and it is not due to his lack of effort, it was due to the fact that I don't think I possessed a love for mathematics or a mathematical brain. We still remember both of them with deep affection, and with deep respect. We were then taught to hold a straight bat at all times.

I can even now hear Father Foster who taught the Under 14 Cricket team shouting at me "Elbow, elbow, elbow! Keep that elbow up!" I can still hear him shouting at me while he was coaching us in the Under 14 Cricket team on the small Club at S.T.C. Mount Lavinia. I got into politics I tried to hold a straight bat there. I will tell you what happened. I got completely bowled out neck and crop, so I had to rethink things. Unfortunately there was a female bowler then, she was a terror - I will tell you why, because she only used to bowl underarm googlies which she had learned at St. Bridget's Convent - She had never played Cricket at S.T.C. or any of these schools. But those were deadly underarm googlies she got us all out; nobody could beat her in that game.

She was a maestro, in what I would call underarm bowling. After that I decided I should do some rethinking. I decided to re-read Machiavelli and Kautilliya whose works I had forgotten since my University days. I think that Machiavelli and Kautilliya are the best coaches of politics, perhaps because neither Machiavelli nor Kautilliya ever played cricket, they never held a straight bat, they never believed in it.

When we were in school we were always taught to accept the umpire's verdict without any hesitation and without any question walk out even before you are given out. I once did it even when I was not out. I remember the incident very well, it was an Under 14 Cricket match between S.T.C. and Royal, the first time that I had ever played for the school. I was given out. I went out as soon as I saw the umpire's finger going up. I came back and Mr. Bradby the then Principal of Royal asked me "What happened to you?, were you out?" I said 'I don't know, the umpire's finger went up and I came back. That's all I know!'"

I don't think I was out that day. Walk out even before you are given out. Accept the umpire's verdict without any question. This too did not pay in politics. In politics it is the done thing to appeal against the umpire's verdict. Now you can see the Mulkirigalla election they have appealed against the umpire's verdict and won also. So some of these old ideas and old concepts which we cherished have long since ceased to hold any validity - not only in the political world but in International sport. They now always appeal against the

umpire even in Wimbledon I have seen it happening, even at Lords I have seen it happening they try to threaten and bully the umpire.

I remember your Headmaster was a wonderful Hockey and Soccer player. I think he played Centre Half I still remember that. I don't think he ever challenged the referee but now they some times even murder referees at football matches, particularly in the world cup, in places like Brazil and Spain and so forth. So the world has changed very much since our school days at S.T.C. Materialism, the growth of commercialism, professionalism has crept into everything, including sports. Many of the values of the old days which we were taught to learn and cherish have vanished never to return. The lesson of all this is that we must be prepared to change with the times. Your Headmaster is already getting ready, as his report said for the 'computer age', I think he is quite right, he is thinking ahead and he is preparing the ground for the future for all the boys of S. Thomas'. But sometimes in a poor third world country like Sri Lanka we must also be conscious of the need for more and more employment, that's our most serious of problem. Computers and robotics have come to stay in the developed world but can we in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world afford to do everything which the developed world is doing today?

In Sri Lanka I think while developing computers, while keeping in step with the latest developments in technology I think we should also develop the appropriate technology for our own lands and for our own standard of development Mr. Gunawardene, boys of S. Thomas' and girls, as I speak to you today our country is going through traumatic times. It is facing one of its gravest crisis in its long and chequered history. As you all know we are virtually in a state of civil war in certain parts of the country. Sri Lanka has gone through many vicissitudes of fortune in the 2500 years history of our land. We have faced many dangers, we have faced many wars, we have faced invasion, we have even lost our independence and been under foreign rule and foreign domination. Now once again our unity and our integrity are threatened both by internal and even by external forces. Human beings, boys and girls, old boys and old girls, who have lived peacefully and amicably together for centuries now find themselves confronting each other. How different things are from those of my school days when Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers even boys from Burma from Malaya from Uganda they were all at S. Thomas' in my time, all of us mixed happily together without any consideration of race or caste or creed or nationality. Our friendships were not based on race or caste or creed, or even nationality.

I remember I had a friend, a boy from Uganda who unfortunately was killed by Idi Amin during that period. Those were the days. The days of our youth which were the days of our glory. Trying to divide a small country like ours, you will all agree is a very futile exercise. No country can keep quiet when its unity and integrity are threatened. I would take your minds back to the history of the United States of America. When the Southern States of the



American union attempted to secede in 1965, Abraham Lincoln, one of the greatest Presidents of the United States did not hesitate to go to war with his own countrymen, to kill them and defeat them to preserve the unity and integrity of his land.

We have no choice, however reluctantly, but military action today our armed forces and our police are doing a magnificent job in trying circumstances and we must all support them to the hilt. There is much that we can do. At the same time, we must do everything possible to find a political solution, if the solution is to be lasting and permanent. No military solution can be lasting and permanent. Nothing can be achieved in the long run by merely killing people, by merely arresting people, or by merely displacing people whether they are Sinhalese or Tamils. We must not only win the war which we are compelled to engage in, we must also win the peace though we are a multiracial, multi-religious country, we are so small a nation that here we have far more things that unite us than divide us. We must therefore eschew narrow sectarian attitudes and put our country before all else. Country before party, country above self, country above personal glory. It is only through economic development and growth that Sri Lankans can lead happier and better lives.

We are too poor to divert our resources and energies away from economic development. We spent nearly seven times more on defence and security than did in 1977. Can a small and poor country like Sri Lanka continue to afford this? If we go on like this, development will slow down, unemployment will increase and the economic and social distress that will result will be worse than anything that we see today. Therefore, the links and bonds between members of different religions and races must be firmly established and nurtured in childhood and in school and in institutions like S. Thomas' Gurutalawa, and this must continue to the end of ones life. It is therefore a special responsibility of parents, it is also the special responsibility of teachers to influence the minds of the students so that once again as in the days of my youth, these differences will gradually disappear. I know it is not an easy task. The present system of education, the present system of school education with different language streams, which did not exist in my day, makes it more difficult, but with the development of a common second language like English and the increasing emphasis on sports, on extra curricular activities and on areas of activity where all join together, these difficulties I am sure could be overcome.

Boarding schools such as Gurutalawa, this is essentially a Boarding school though the Headmaster tells me; you do have some day scholars, boarding schools like this where students come into much closer contact with each other have an advantage over other schools, and I am sure that the present Headmaster, Mr. Gunawardena, and the teachers are following the great traditions of their predecessors people like Dr. Hayman and Father Foster, and doing what they can to promote communal harmony and peace.

Once again, I would like to reiterate that 'United we Stand, Divided we fall.' We cannot appeal for aid to General Walter or to President Reagan or to Rajiv Gandhi, or to Mr. Chernenkov or to Margaret Thatcher, or to anybody else. We must settle our own problems ourselves. Let us never forget that. Some of the students of this school will I am sure in course of time go on to do higher studies while others will be leaving school for employment. I would like to speak a word about that too. The dramatic development in science and technology necessitates new thinking on employment if we are to gear ourselves to meet the new challenges that face us. The time has come when students of schools like S. Thomas' Gurutalawa must give up seeking so called status jobs. There is a great weakness in this country for what in Sinhalese we call "Thathveya". In English "Status". Everyone wants a status job.

The concept of dignity of labour is not understood properly even now in the education set up of our land. So, I think in Sri Lanka, it would mean the introduction of a new set of values and a new outlook on life and schools like S. Thomas' Gurutalawa must do that. Things are very different today from my days in school and from the days of your fathers. Today, a hotel Chef for example, a skilled technician, a skilled electrician, a skilled foreman, even a carpenter or a mason or a plumber earns several times the salary of a graduate. So, why consider status anymore, particularly when what is considered status today is no longer considered status tomorrow. The world is changing so fast.

In my time for example no one wanted to join a Bank. It was unheard of. The Bank of Ceylon was there even in my time. I don't think a single student in S. Thomas' College in my time aimed to join a bank. That was one of the things that was not preferred. Everyone preferred the Administrative Service, if possible, the Civil Service or even teaching to a bank job. Today, things are very different. Everyone is pestering me to find them a Bank job. What is important is that you seek out a job for which you possess the talent. You must not let your talents and your aptitudes go waste. All of us I think can make a contribution to society in different ways. Our Government therefore is placing more and more emphasis on vocational education and training.

I hope that more and more schools will provide this training for the large number of students who will not be pursuing higher studies so that all of them could be useful members of Sri Lankan society. Otherwise, the vast amounts of money spent on their education will be a total waste of resources. In view of the fact that the resources of the government and the private sector are both limited we are also doing everything possible as a government to encourage self-employment, for youth. Unlike the days of my schooling, tremendous opportunities are available in agriculture. All round you agriculture is developing in the Welimada area and all over the country. Tremendous opportunities are available in horticulture, tremendous opportunities are

available in farming whether it be poultry or something else. Tremendous opportunities are available in the development of fisheries resources of our land. Tremendous opportunities are available even in dairy farming, in small industries. So do not fail to grasp these new opportunities which are now available which we denied to our own generation.

Boys of schools like yours are always looked upon as reference groups or as leaders by the other schools in the country so you must therefore set an example to them and lead the way by launching out in new directions and spreading the new ideas. If you give the lead, the boys of S. Thomas', I am sure the others will follow you. Self-employment will be given a tremendous boost and the curse of 'status jobs' in our land will be removed from our society forever. Whatever the type of education whether academic or vocational, I must stress the fact that if you are to reach the top or anywhere near the top, you must be imbued with that spirit of excellence which inspired us at S. Thomas' Mt. Lavinia in that year 1942 to which I referred.

The desire to do the very best we can in whatever endeavour we chose to embark upon. However difficult the circumstances in the country, never be satisfied with the second best. If you lack the spirit of excellence, you will lack the motivating force to take you to the very top in this very competitive modern world. When one is guided by the spirit of excellence life becomes more interesting, more satisfying and more rewarding, but it also requires very hard work.

I would therefore exhort you to follow what another great American President; Theodore Roosevelt called and defined as the strenuous life. By that he meant the life of toil and effort, I am quoting his own words. The life of labour and of strife that highest form of success which comes not to the man who desires mere easy peace but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph. Success therefore never comes easy in life it is only the result of hard work.

Hard work alone is not enough, it must be combined with discipline. It is sad to note the growing indiscipline in this land. You cannot achieve great heights unless you are firmly in control of yourselves. Discipline is not something that one acquires late in life. Unless you are a disciplined child, it is unlikely that you will ever be a disciplined man or woman. So, the responsibility is great both on parents and on teachers, to teach children the importance of discipline both at home and at school. We must act now before it is too late, and save the future generations and our country from the tragic consequences of indiscipline.

Mr. Gunawardena, ladies and Gentlemen, boys of S. Thomas' and girls, S. Thomas' College Gurutalawa though young in years is a school rich in tradition. You have imbibed the best of S.T.C. Mt. Lavinia in a new setting far from the sea

and the rolling waves to which we were used. Amid the hills and undulating valleys of Uva, you have had the finest of teachers. Men like Dr. Hayman and Father Foster and those who succeeded them up to the time of Mr. Patrick Gunawardena. The school has grown from strength to strength under their guidance and their leadership.

I know that your present Headmaster is continuing to maintain the same great traditions and I am sure that the students of this school will live up to them. You are fortunate to be educated in a school like this in what I still call the 'Best School of all'. where the building of character has always been more important than either studies or even sports. The greatest need of the hour is men and women of strong moral fibre who can face up to and overcome the difficulties that confront us. "A time like this demands great hearts, strong minds, true faith and willing hands,. Men who the lust of office cannot kill. Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy. Men who possess opinions and a will. Men who have honour. Men who will not lie." I am confident that S. Thomas' Gurutalawa will produce such men. *Esto Perpetua.*

**Vote of thanks Proposed by Mr. Peter Weerakoon, President O.B.A. Uva Province**

Honoured Sir, and Mrs. De Mel, Headmaster, Distinguished Guests, Old Boys, Members of the Staff, Parents, Ladies and Gentlemen, and last but not least fellow Thomians,

It is my pleasant duty today to welcome on behalf of S. Thomas' College Old Boys Association of Gurutalawa you, Sir, as our Chief Guest. Chief Guests at Prize Givings are always men or women of eminence who have distinguished themselves in the service of the nation and you, Sir, having been one of the most outstanding and brilliant students of your day at S. Thomas' College Mt. Lavinia from the year 1935 to the year 1942 where during your very brilliant scholastic career you won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize in Divinity, The W.P. Ransinghe Memorial Prize for Current Affairs in 1940, and the Charles Peiris Prize for History.

You also obtained the 1<sup>st</sup> place in the London Matriculation examination and was placed 1<sup>st</sup> in Sri Lanka. At the University of Ceylon, you crowned your academic career by winning the plum of the academic world of your day by winning the English University Scholarship for Post Graduate Studies. You proceeded to Cambridge to obtain your doctorate but returned to Sri Lanka when you passed the Civil Service Examination to take up the appointment of Assistant Government Agent which you served with distinction. First the academic world lost you and then the administrative world lost you when you retired at the very early age of 37 years to take to the dust and dirt of politics.

There again, you achieved distinction by being one of the architects of the Ceylon Agricultural Development Plan which is now the centre of all development activities in Sri Lanka. You further gained distinction by being one of the only Finance Ministers in the world and in Sri Lanka to present 8 consecutive Budgets for the development of this country and to lift the people from their poverty and give them a place in the sun. behind all successful men, they say is always a woman and you, Madam, I am sure have been a tower of strength to him during his career both politically and at his normal other duties, and I am confident you will continue to be a tower of strength to him so that Mother Lanka will be very proud of one of her sons.

You are no stranger, Mrs. De Mel to S. Thomas' College although in our period in College we did not have girls in school otherwise you would also have been an old girl. Your father, the late Mr. Leo Fernando was a benefactor of S. Thomas' College Mt. Lavinia and your family connections with S. Thomas' College remind us of the time we still love and cherish. It is indeed a great pleasure to have you both with us today to preside and distribute the prizes at the Annual Prize Giving in spite of all the other engagements you have in your busy world and in view of the fact of your very recent loss in your family.

And I take this opportunity on behalf of everyone present here this morning to thank you for your gracious presence and to wish you all the very best in the future. Thank you.

## **Vote Of Thanks Seconded By Head Prefect Mijwaad Laffir**

The Hon. Minister of Finance and Planning Mr. Ronie De Mel, Mrs. De Mel, Headmaster Sir, Members of the Board of Governors, Members of the Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen and fellow Thomians.

I consider it to be a great honour to be given the opportunity to second the vote of Thanks proposed by the President of the O.B.A. (Uva) Province, Mr. Peter Weerakoon to you, Honourable Sir. On behalf of the boys of S. Thomas' College Gurutalawa I extend to you Sir and Mrs. De Mel our most sincere thanks for honouring us by your distinguished presence on this most important occasion in our school. It is even a greater honour when we consider the fact that you are one of the most distinguished products of our parent school at Mt. Lavinia, and one who is highly admired and respected by all of us Thomians at Gurutalawa. After a brilliant career at S. Thomas' and in the University as described by the Headmaster and a top ranking administrator in the Civil Service you chucked up the plums of high office which were within your grasp to take to politics. You undoubtedly did so to be closer to the people and to be of greater service to the people in our country.

We are very proud that S. Thomas' has produced men like you who have always been at the helm of Sri Lankan politics. You are following the great tradition of other great Thomians like D.S. Senanayake, Dudley Senanayake, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Mr. W. Dahanayake. Today there are some who say that the Thomian monopoly of politics has ended, but I am very happy to say that this is not so. For the portfolio of Finance & Planning is the most important in any government. In all your budgets you have placed great emphasis on economic development. You have set apart funds for the magnificent schemes now nearing completion. These schemes will ensure us, the youth of this country; employment opportunities in so many avenues. We, Thomians and the youth of our country, should give you our fullest cooperate to your call to the nation for discipline dedication and hard work.

Honoured Sir, it is our tradition to honour the visit of the Chief Guest by declaring a holiday for our boys but the headmaster has fixed your visit in such a way as to enable you to declare one month's holiday from tomorrow. This is unfair. Therefore on behalf of my friends and students of the school, I pray for an extra holiday on any Friday next term in honour of your visit today. May I conclude by saying how grateful we are to you and Mrs. De Mel for having graced this occasion and of having graciously consented to give away the prizes today. Thank you.

