

March 23,2005

Rt. Rev. Duleep de Chickera,
Bishop of Colombo,
Bishop's House,
No. 370, Bullers Road,
Colombo 7.

BY HAND

Your Lordship,

**FUTURE OF S.THOMAS COLLEGE, GURUTALWA
DISCUSSION ON MARCH 29,2005**

I thank you for inviting me to the above Meeting.

I had planned to leave Colombo on the evening of the 29th in order to attend a function. However, I am keen to attend the Meeting at Mt.Lavinia and shall make every effort to do so.

In the meantime, I have in the short time available prepared a note which I hope will be considered by those interested in the above subject. I am enclosing a copy so that you could peruse same in advance.

Please excuse me if there are any shortcomings therein. I have since early February been worried and pre-occupied with the health of my baby daughter.

I wish the meeting and the discussions success and hope that the outcome would augur well for the future of the College.

With warm Regards,

Yours sincerely,

Lakshman Jayatilaka

SOME POINTS TO ASSIST THE BOARD REGARDING THE FUTURE OF S.THOMAS COLLEGE GURUTALAWA

The Background

1. In August 2001 with the concurrence of the Headmaster Mr.Alban Fernando a small group of Old Boys did an in depth study of the situation and problems at College and prepared a Confidential Report dated October 10 2001. The reasons which impelled us to do so are referred to therein. Our letter of October 29,2001 addressed to His Lordship, The Bishop of Colombo and the Chairman of the Board of Governors of S.Thomas College explains the Report as follows:-

“We hand you herewith some observations made by a group of Old Boys ('62 Group). It is done solely with the welfare of the College at heart and as we were encouraged by the remarks made by you at the last Prize Giving; that you would give your personal attention to Gurutalawa.

For far too long Gurutalawa has received step-motherly treatment.

It is our view that any person, be he an old boy or not, who has the welfare of the College and its future at heart owes a duty to bring any matter which would bring progress to the College to the attention of the authorities concerned. It is for the authorities to decide what should be done.

You yourself would have observed that the College, its buildings and the campus generally require attention. The breakdown of the sound system during the Prize Giving is an example of another area which requires your immediate attention, i.e. discipline of the relevant Staff, now that some comment has been made in that connection by the out going Head Master.

To our mind two matters that need urgent attention are the mobilization of the Teaching Staff and taking corrective measures with regard to regularizing finance. Introduction of a daily cash-flow return from the Accounts Department to the Head Master/Bishop will have an immediate impact on financial accounting. Regular frank meetings commencing without delay between the Head Master and the Senior Tutorial Staff collectively or individually will create the necessary confidence in them and bring the desired results.

Assuring you of our highest regard.”

This Report was not undertaken for a fee or at the request of anybody. It was a labour of love born out of concern for the institution. **The nature of the problems that existed then, still persist, albeit with far greater magnitude.**

2. In the Introduction to this Confidential Report at page 8 we stated:

“For these reasons, it has been suggested by very distinguished old boys, in fact the cream of the college, those who have worked alongside

Dr.Hayman and who were associated with him in the formation of the OBA and who have also worked closely with the Board of Governors, that the college should have a Management (Advisory) Committee under the aegis of the Board of Governors with majority representation by respected and very Senior Old Boys who are in a position to give of their time energy, experience and expertise and thereby seek to pull the college out of it's present morass and ensure that there is a continuity of a broad policy so that the different agendas of different Head Masters which may be in conflict with the best interest of the College can be avoided. The Board of Governors too as everybody knows has all this time had only a theoretical interest in the College. These very senior old boys feel that the OBA must regard itself as the true custodian of the schools' traditions and be prepared to play a greater role on matters of policy and administration than has previously been the case.

In the alternative, The Head Master must be assisted by a Chief Administration Officer of the qualifications and background S.Thomas' College Mt.Lavinia has very recently advertised for, now that a Deputy Head Master is not being appointed.

We were therefore enormously encouraged by the remarks made by His Lordship the Bishop of Colombo at the last Prize Giving on September 10,2001 and are confident that His Lordship would stand firm and solidly behind any genuine endeavour to improve College so that the hitherto step-motherly treatment that was received from above will be no more."

3. At page 56 in the Confidential Report we stated:

"It is imperative that recruitment of under –qualified, inexperienced persons for the Tutorial Staff obviously on the basis of their relationship to members of the Staff should be avoided. Longstanding members of the Tutorial Staff who are qualified, experienced and who produced good results are perturbed and concerned about this type of recruitment and for the sake of the advancement of the students, request that the first criteria for recruitment should be qualifications and/or experience and not their relationship to members of the Staff. If recruitment on this adhoc basis continues the disenchantment and frustration of members of the Tutorial Staff will increase and can only lead to a total break-down of education and perhaps a closure of the school."

And at page 69 of the Confidential Report we stated:-

"Thus it is left for those in authority to take corrective measures."

4. In our Newsletter No. 1 of November 09,2001 at page 8 we stated:-

*“We have however made it very clear to the authorities that our involvement is subject to their putting the house in order first. **There is no point in executing any development work which is going to be the immediate object of any act of vandalism by the senior students just because they have a grievance against the conditions in college or its administration however fair or just they may be.**”*

5. In our Newsletter No. 2 of November 24,2001 at page 2/3 we stated:-

*“We have already achieved a great deal. Consequent to numerous requests from various interested sources to take a greater interest in the activities in Guru we embarked on a fact finding mission. Some of our Members took lodging in Bandarawela and executed as complete an investigation as was possible inspecting the Campus at Guru and interviewing the Ex- Head Master, the present Head Master, and where necessary, with their permission, the Members of the Tutorial Staff, Administration Staff, Minor Staff, Students and Parents both inside and out side College. **A Confidential Report compiled in as brief a manner and time as possible and yet running in to 80 pages was handed over to the Bishop in view of its sensitive nature to enable him to take such steps as he may see fit with all the urgency the circumstances demanded. Suffice it is to state that we were able to douse a fairly explosive situation and have neutralized certain factors that could have brought to a complete halt all educational activities at Guru. We do not wish to go in to detail and the Report is continued to be kept confidential at the request of the Bishop. We are however prepared to discuss certain aspects contained therein at the appropriate time, only with a view for the betterment of College.***

*We are still operating on a clear assurance given that no precipitate action would be taken by those quarters **and we are doing everything possible to expedite the taking of remedial measures so that the Administration at Guru can be put back on the correct track, College is resuscitated and once more on course to achieve the ideals and objectives set forth by the Founding Fathers.** This in our view has been our greatest achievement and are gratified that eminent Old Boys and the Pioneers of the OBA have commended us having read our Report, understood our mission appreciated our commitment and encouraged us in our activities etc. This satisfies us immensely.*

6. Mr.Nimal Bharathi one of our respected Masters wrote to the Bishop on November 27,2001 in the following terms

“I am writing this letter at the request of the '62 Group' of Old Boys of S.Thomas' Gurutalawa of which I am also an honorary member as their teacher (one of three surviving ones).

The Group has forwarded you an 80 page report on the School after a very comprehensive study and a series of interviews. A copy of the report, which at your request has been kept confidential and has not been circulated among the members, has been given to me in my capacity as a respected teacher and also as a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese.

The Report has highlighted deficiencies and weaknesses in many important areas which cover aspects such as non-compliance of financial procedures, deterioration in discipline and moral values both amongst staff and students, teacher-student relationships, lack of proper student counselling, the role of the Chaplain, and other matters. I trust that you have already initiated action to look in to these deficiencies and put the school, which had an unblemished reputation under Dr.Hayman and Rev.Foster and even later, back in the correct direction. I am confident that with the appointment of a new dynamic Head Master this could be achieved..

The authors of the report together with me are prepared to give you any assistance you require in this connection. We could also meet you and the Headmaster on a convenient date to discuss the issues highlighted in the Report.

*I wish to assure you on behalf of the Group that their objective is not a witch-hunt of those named in the Report, but rather to correct what has happened, learning from these experiences. **Their only concern is the welfare of the school which they still love and cherish.***

7. By letter dated December 14,2001 the Bishop informed us as follows:

“As I mentioned when we met recently the status of your report needs to be clarified.

I suggest that you either take it up through the OBA so that it becomes an official proposal of the OBA to the Board or leave it with me for consideration and implementation as and when possible.

I appreciate your concern and the concern of persons like Nimal Bhareti who have also written to me on this matter, and assure you that the Board and I will do our best for the school.

I am also confident that you will understand that since there is an official OBA I cannot recognize your group officially.

As for the appointment of a Chaplain, Revd. Suresh Dias Bandaranayake cannot be released at present. I have however initiated steps to appoint a qualified person as Lay Chaplain. This is likely to be confirmed shortly. I am copying this to Mr.Nimal Bhareti as well since he has shown an interest in your report.”

8. We responded to the Bishop by our letter of January 08,2002 as follows:-

“We thank you for your letter of December 14,2001.

..... *In the meantime, to come back to your letter, we note that you,*

*(i) need some clarification as regards the “Status” of our Report, and
(ii) cannot recognize our Group officially since there is an official OBA.*

- a) *Although it would appear any discussion on the above matters may perhaps be purely of “academic interest” now, it may be appropriate on our part if the correct position as we see it, is set out. No one should later say that we failed in our duty to place this on record.*
- b) *Firstly, the observations we placed before you were prepared by 03 members of our Group (which is loosely referred to as the “62 Group”). This Group consists of about 80 Old Boys who were students at Gurutalawa covering a period from its very first year of existence right up to the 1990’s. They are not confined to a particular Class or Year, (as the numbers of such category in the case of Gurutalawa would be very small). The need for this Group to take an active interest arose at the beginning of this year to fill the vacuum of not having Old Boys who could act efficiently and speedily for the betterment of the College as the organized OBA appeared to be uninterested and/or ineffective. Whilst almost all our members are members of the OBA, we count among them several past and present members of the Ex-Co of the OBA including Vice Presidents. The core group consists of highly qualified and accomplished Old Boys in Canada, USA, UK, Australia and also in Sri Lanka.*
- c) *While Mr. Bradman Weerakoon, Mr.P S Duleep Kumar, and several Masters who have retired are Honorary Members, Very Senior Old Boys of the 1940’s & ‘50’s are fully supportive of the steps we are taking to support College, and give new life to the OBA. They consist perhaps of the most distinguished and accomplished Old Boys of Gurutalawa, who are actively involved in its progress and development.*
- d) *We are not a break-away group of the OBA and all our actions have been focused to strengthen the OBA which has lost it’s vitality and virility. These facts and the status were emphasized by no less a person than Mr. Bradman Weerakoon, at our Fellowship-Dinner on November 24, 2001.*

- e) *There are several Old Boys (members of the OBA and non-members) who individually, in twos, threes and small groups give assistance to College, particularly through the Head Master. None of these individuals or groups who meet informally and render assistance to College whether in cash, material or expertise (legal and otherwise) have sought any “recognition” from the College or the Church to assist the College. Head Masters and other officers of the Institution consistently call upon Old Boys for their advice without having conferred on them any official Status or Recognition and such assistance and advice is given readily and willingly, and the need to clarify their Status and / or obtain any official recognition before imparting any advice or assistance etc. did not and does not arise. This has been the practice for over 4 decades. Nobody has questioned their status, or willingness to assist the institution. They have not requested that they be recognized. No one has asked them to apply for recognition. Status or Recognition is not, has not and should not be an issue.*
- f) *We, as a group of Old Boys are hoping to rejuvenate the OBA, and are actively involved in assisting College through the medium of the Head Master without in any way interfering with his administration.*
- g) *The observations made by us in regard to Gurutalawa were not prompted by the OBA or the Ex-Head Master. They were solely of our own initiative and made with the best interests of the College and its present and future students, at heart.*
- h) ***As explained, many of our observations relate to highly confidential and sensitive issues and would be highly impracticable nay impossible to submit direct to the Head Master or for action through the OBA after open discussion.** In any event, the OBA and its Ex-Co are so out of tune with reality and lethargic that no useful purpose would have been served in attempting to do so.*
- i) *As such at no time did we seek recognition from you and do not intend doing so now or in the future.*
- j) *Whilst we do not concede that you have any difficulty in recognizing us since there is an “Official OBA”, the question of recognition would hardly arise in view of what we have stated above.*
- k) *There were a few matters which required very urgent attention by the new Head Master before he could place himself in a position which would have embarrassed him and also prejudiced College and himself. That is why we were keen to have at least those matters brought to his notice and resolved early. e.g. A new Secretary to be appointed for the new Head Master to handle all his confidential work and dispense with the Old hand at the end of his term on December 31,2001. This would have been a matter of*

common sense given the facts outlined by us. We are not sure whether these matters have been satisfactorily attended to. But then, we have done our duty by College.

..... *Secondly, to put this question in its proper perspective, we are sure if any important or confidential information is placed before you by,*

- I. a well wisher or a member of the community of the Gurutalawa village or*
- II. a member of the Tutorial, Administration or Minor staff of the College or*
- III. a student or parent of the College or*
- IV. Old Boys who may have visited the College or passed through.*
- V. An Old Boy who is the O I C of the Welimada Police.*

That –

- Immoral activities are taking place within the premises with the connivance of responsible persons on the Campus.*
- Movable property, beds, tables, chairs, motor vehicles, etc etc are being pilfered, removed or misused.*
- Trees are being illicitly felled*
- Students are not being made to attend classes, regularly and are being diverted towards other areas.*

*You would not direct that such information be transmitted to you by those persons through the OBA. After all, what have any of the above individuals got to do with the OBA?. We are sure that in the circumstances of the case , prudence would have demanded your sending a handpicked Trouble Shooter to investigate and report back to you on a highly confidential and priority basis, after making available to him our report or arranging a meeting with us. **This can be done even now. It will not take even 03 days to accomplish.** It is common knowledge that this procedure is adopted in similar situations.*

- a) When the exigencies of the situation demand it, even anonymous information is solicited to root out corruption and misdeeds, and the identity of the informant is not revealed.*
- b) In our case we are prepared to meet and discuss the issues. Our group has sufficient credibility and responsibility that some urgent action could have been taken. No one could have found fault if we had been treated as one of the categories I to V above.*

... *Thirdly, over 7,500 students have been admitted to Gurutalawa since 1942. At the inauguration of the OBA in 1959, about 80 Old Boys were present. Today almost four decades have passed and yet, the number participating in the Reunion or AGM is about the same. We found that more than 346 members*

had been left out in the cold incommunicado, as their current addresses are not available with the present Ex-Co of the OBA. If the OBA was allowed to go on in the present fashion very soon it would have been reduced to only its Ex-Co and perhaps a handful of members.

a. We have by making over 250 personal visits to houses/offices in the CMC areas as well as suburbs of Colombo and communicating with over 294 outstation members all over Sri Lanka brought to the Association over 250 members during a period of 07 months since June 2001. We have also been instrumental in having admitted to membership a very large number of new members in a very short period of time. In fact we, as an active Group are doing all the work the OBA ought to do to enliven the OBA and be the mechanism to spearhead the development of College and the betterment of future generations of Thomians. This has been the common observation of numerous concerned Old Boys.

b. We are also sure that if for arguments sake an OBA hardly exists or ceases to exist at all for all practical purposes you would not be waiting for official proposals to come from the OBA, and refuse to recognize information placed before you by any person, whether Old Boy or well wisher, imposing a restraint by way of a pre-requisite of “status”.

... Whilst we appreciate that you are fully entitled to the view you seem to have taken we feel most respectfully that you are completely misdirected and that is why we have written at length to you to show you how wrong you could be. We are humbled that Bradman and Ronnie Weerakoon, Sisira Nanayakkara, P S Duleep Kumar, A H Ellawala, W S Dambawinna, Roy Abeysekara, C E H De Saram and so many others among a galaxy of distinguished Old Boys who pioneered our OBA and who have in letters to us faulted previous indifference of the Board of Governors, the shortsightedness of the Head Masters who have come and gone in quick succession each with his own agenda and priorities and the ineffectiveness of the OBA to give proper direction and guidance to the authorities whilst strongly commending us on our activities have expressed their unstinted co-operation and support, financial and otherwise in all our activities to resuscitate College.

... We are quite content to leave the observations etc made by us for your wise consideration and implementation as and when possible. The only draw back would be that certain matters did require rectification with some sense of urgency. We certainly cannot and would not exert any pressure on you.

... Currently, in a climate in which two of the Schools are reported to want to close down their Boardings and rumours are afloat that Gurutalawa as an institution is also to be closed down as it is not financially viable, and the students transferred to the other branches, and property disposed of, we the Old Boys are willing to stand by the College (and the Church).

- *We wish to assure you that you have our highest respect, regard and consideration and all of us would continue to co-operate with you and the Head Master and be available to assist you or him to the best of our ability without in any way interfering with his administration or your decisions. We deeply appreciate that you have given us a hearing.*
- ***We are happy to note that the Board and you will do your best for the school, although the interest of the Board in this particular School has in the past, always been found much less than what it has deserved as a national asset.***
- *We understand that a Lay Chaplain has now been appointed. We hope he will fulfill a long felt need of the College. We wish to thank you for same.*
- *As already indicated we intend with your blessings, taking up with the Head Master, tactfully, as many of the observations referred to earlier, at the appropriate time, if possible, and continue to assist the College and the Head Master if and when our assistance is welcome and / or solicited.*

With kind regards and wishing you a Very Happy New Year.”

Placed in this situation we continued to do our best for College working with the OBA and the Headmaster and keeping the Bishop informed regularly of all our activities.

9. In our Newsletter No.4 of February 2002 at page 32 we stated:-

“In days gone by most of the new entrants to the 6th Standard or Lower 4th were from S.Thomas’ Prep School at Bandarawela. A few were from S.Thomas’ Prep School at Kollupitiya. The rest came from other schools. With Prep School Bandarawela commencing their own middle school, the main source dried up, and College was thus compelled to start its own Primary Section from Year 1-5 in 1978 or so at the Gurutalawa Village End of the Campus, in the Keble Section. Although it is reported that the complex can accommodate 300 boarders and apparently did so at one time, presently there are only 76 Boarders, and 42 Day Boys in the Primary School. 23 new admissions have been recorded to date in the Primary Section for the year 2002.”

10. In our Newsletter No. 5 of February 16,2002 at page 4 we stated:-

"FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF COLLEGE – CONDITION OF CAMPUS

Having stated the above, it is clear to all Old Boys that the College is presently confronting a sad situation. The entire Infrastructure has collapsed. One has to traverse the Campus to see the rot and deterioration. Electricity, water service, telecommunication, sanitary facilities, accommodation, food,

sports, library and a host of other areas need urgent attention before the system collapses. The social background of the student population is very different to what prevailed earlier. The quality of the tutorial staff on the whole is equally very different and most reside outside the Campus. It is said that fees are not paid on time by most of the students. **The Institution at present is not financially viable. College has to resort to bank borrowings to meet its monthly commitments.** The interest on overdraft facilities is heavy. Cutting and selling of trees has been the last resort adopted several times over in the recent past to clear up unbearable financial burdens. Soon there will be no more trees to cut. These are all trees that existed even during Dr. Hayman's time which were preserved and the environs declared out of bounds and inviolate.

IS SOLUTION FOR FINANCIAL STABILITY – CONSTRUCTION AND REFURBISHMENT OF BUILDINGS

Gifted Office Equipment, Class Room or Dormitory furniture, painting and color washing and repairing buildings, constructing edifices for particular purposes as has been done by well meaning Old Boys including ourselves is obviously not the solution to the problems outlined above. These will not fill the coffers or help pay the bills. At the soft opening of the new Dining Hall and the Administration Block project undertaken by the OBA, a new Computer Room was also declared open ceremonially. Yet within weeks, the computers had to be removed to a room in close proximity to the Head Master's Office for security reasons. One could say the same sad fate has befallen the S.K. Wickremasinghe Class Room Block opened in 1976 and also the Club House opened in 1976. These examples show construction of building is no solution to the financial mess.

NEED FOR A DEVELOPMENT PLAN – MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

It is therefore clear that collecting money from Old Boys and attending to construction of buildings or patch work is not the solution. The problem is first and foremost one of Management and Administration on a long term plan. This is an aspect that requires the advise and guidance of those who are experts in the field. A well-meaning Head Master as perhaps the present holder of that office is not likely to be able to overcome these difficulties single-handedly although he may show signs of correcting certain ills. Since the departure of Dr. Hayman, slowly but gradually the rot has set in. One root cause is indiscipline. Dr. Hayman was resident on the Campus. It was his home. The same can be said of Father Foster and several other Members of the Tutorial Staff during that era. Today there is nobody responsible on the Campus during the Holidays. In the above situation, it cannot be said, unfortunately, that the OBA has (together with the Head Master) and the Board of Governors been successful in arresting this deterioration of standards in College.”

11. In our Newsletter No.6 February 21,2002 in page 1 & 2 we stated:-

*“There are about 299 Boarders and 154 Day Boys in College. The total School Fees only, @ Rs.1,500/- per student, from 450 students, is about Rs.675,000/- The total Boarding fees only @ Rs.2,000/- per student, from 300 students is about Rs.600,000/-. The total collection of fees is therefore about Rs.1,275,000/-. A large proportion of students do not pay their fees on time. The aggregate Wage Bill of all Employees is approximately Rs.875,750/- per month. The total salary of 39 members in the Tutorial Staff is about Rs.305,518/- plus E.P.F, E.T.F (and Pension). The total salary of 56 members in the Minor Staff is about Rs.254,950/- plus EPF and ETF. The total salary of 15 employees handling Administration, Accounts and Miscellaneous, exceeds Rs.100,000/- plus EPF and ETF (and Pension). The Food Bill of the Boarders is Rs.325,000/-. The postage, printing, stationery, petrol, bakery, maintenance, laundry, library, sick-room, chapel, games, telephone, water, College stores, travelling, general expenses, electricity and security services etc, etc aggregate to approximately Rs.400,000/-. Thus, the total collection of fees, i.e Rs.1,275,000/-, even if made on time, is not sufficient to meet the monthly commitment, i.e Rs.1,600,000/-. College has 15 employees in the Administration and Accounts Section etc. to handle a student population of 450. Yet, Royal, Visakha, Isipathana, STPS Kollupitiya, Alethea, Stafford, CIS and STC Mt with student populations of 8000, 4288, 400, 1009, 990, 740, 1270 & 2280 respectively have 15, 15, 15, 10, 10, 07, 16 & 15 employees respectively handling Administration and Accounts. **Even in 1983 when there were 1,247 students at Gurutalawa, there were only 37 minor employees. Today there are 56 minor employees.** There are 18 employees attached to the kitchen; 4 each attached to the Farm, Conservancy and Keble; 03 each for Class Rooms, Driving and Bakery, out of the 56 in the minor Staff. At least 18 employees are on contract or temporary. There are 15 members on the Tutorial Staff of 38 on contract or temporary basis. However, there are only 05 on contract or on temporary basis in a minor staff of 56. The rest have been made permanent. The proportion of students to paid employees is 4 :1 (which is very high). Perhaps 20-25% of the employees may be redundant. Somebody appears to have blundered down the line by generously issuing permanent letters of Appointment. 07 members on the tutorial staff get less pay than those in the administration. **An English Assistant Teacher and a Kindergarten Teacher are paid even less than Conservancy Labourers. In Dr. Hayman’s last year, ie. 1962 when there were 300 boarders (ie. the identical number as at present) and the boarding and school fees was approximately Rs. 125/- per month, there were only 3 employees handling accounts and administration. No student was in arrears of fees. The staff was contented, the campus, buildings, gardens, could not have looked better. The staff were totally resident on the campus, fully involved in sports and extra curricular activities, for no additional allowances. Today more than 50% of the staff quarters are vacant, abandoned, and not maintained. The***

involvement of most of the staff with the college ceases as soon as classroom work is over. Boxing, Tennis, Gymnastics, Hiking, Cross Country Runs, Outward Bound School, Bird Watching, Physical Training, Horse Riding, Scouting are things of the past. The present generation of Thomians do not enjoy these outdoor activities. Swimming, Basket Ball, Badminton, Volley Ball, Hockey etc. are played superficially. The college magazine has disappeared. The Library is not updated. All buildings, and facilities like electricity, water service, telecommunication, sanitary, drainage, gardens, accommodation, food, have deteriorated to such an extent that the system hangs on a thin thread. Roofs of the Dining Hall, Class Rooms, Dormitories are all leaking and hence any new furniture put in by well meaning old boys are bound to deteriorate rapidly. Despite the fact that college can boast of two highly qualified members on the teaching staff having over 20 years service at Guru, some vital areas of tutoring like English have been thoroughly neglected. The Primary Section is said to have a capacity of 300 Boarders. Yet there are only 76.”

And at page 4/5 we stated:-

*“None of these glaring shortcomings are attributable to the present Head Master. He is making a valiant effort and steady progress. He has the support and understanding of the OBA and old boys, and now even a good section of the staff. Despite the co-operation given by all of them the results of the poor management and administration of his predecessors visit him and will over take him going by the statistics and facts set out above. All the efforts, the generosity, sacrifices and contributions made by well meaning old boys, parents, and staff in waiving allowances or constructing buildings or painting, renovating, refurbishing dormitories or class rooms or gifting sports or office equipment, class room furniture, etc., will not and cannot avert the simple arithmetic of financial viability. New buildings or painting dorms do not a debit balance in the bank wipe out. **THE SOLUTION WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND IN CHANGING MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION TECHNIQUES, THE CONCEPTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AS A WHOLE AND OPENING THE DOORS AND WINDOWS TO FRESH IDEAS AND VIEWS IN LINE WITH TO DAY’S NEEDS, REALITIES AND MARKET FORCES. MODERN TRENDS AND CONCEPTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS OPTIONS HAVING IN MIND THE UNIQUE FEATURES AVAILABLE ON THE CAMPUS.** These are not matters a well meaning and capable Head Master can accomplish by himself. This cannot be resolved even by an efficient and dedicated manager single handed assisting the head master. **The Board of Governors is far removed from realities and unaware of the ground situation which is hidden from them.** Those responsible, mistakenly though with good intention, perhaps wishing to cushion the higher ups, hide the truth. The Bishop, is too busy and preoccupied with a vast array of responsibilities to single handedly find solutions with the Headmaster.”*

12. In our Newsletter No.7 of February 25,2002 at page 3 we stated as follows:-

*“We have repeatedly said we are not seeking office. Then what are we clamouring for ? Our campaign has been for a cause. The Cause is College. Let a new team composed of the old and the young, truly representative of the membership assume office and with the valuable advise of all Old Boys work closely with the Head Master and convince the Board of Governors of what needs to be done for Gurutalawa. **We are confident that the new team will be a source of great encouragement and assistance to the Head Master and the Board of Governors who will be satisfied with the new ideas and concepts of management and administration that are hoped to be suggested and put in place after the widest possible discussions. We give an assurance that we will continue to be vigilant and maintain the pressure on this new Ex-Co if it is elected to office.**”*

And at page 4 we stated:-

“The Old boys who are descending on Gurutalawa this year do so to show their disapproval of hiding the true position and not keeping them informed. That is why we requested informal meetings or discussions in Colombo from time to time at which a large number of members and Old boys who are unable to come to Gurutalawa can and will participate and contribute. Lets open the doors and windows and get some fresh air and new ideas. Do not reject any Old Boy. The response of the hundreds who are expected this year at Gurutalawa will show that there are so many who care about College and the OBA.”

13. In our subsequent letter addressed to Fellow Thomians we stated at paras 4 & 5

“The affairs of College, particularly financial, are in a precarious position. This is borne out by the recent Reports of Head Masters at Prize Givings and AGM’s and also remarks made by the Manager of the School at the last AGM. There is no controversy about it.

This situation has arisen consequent to neglect in Administration and Management as well as not having proper planning over a period of time.....”

“.....Whilst all of us wish to improve and give a new direction to College, we may perhaps have different methods of approaching the problem.....”

“.....We are firmly of the view that our Ex-Co needs a reorientation of thinking. It needs talented people who can impress upon the Bishop and

the Board of Governors that it is high time the step-motherly treatment meted out to Guru comes to an end.

The message all of us must give the Board of Governors is that we have amongst our Old Boys, sufficient talent and expertise to reformulate the destinies of our College, together with the new Head Master with whom we are prepared to join forces.”

14. In our Newsletter No.10 at page 17 we stated

“ The Way Ahead:- The optimum number of students to be had on the Roll (Boarders and Day Boys separately); Whether student admission should be selective; The curriculum of studies with special emphasis on improvement in teaching of English and introduction of Information Technology and computers; Making sports and extra-curricular activities compulsory and a part of life and education in College and providing appropriate infra structure and coaching facilities therefor whilst re-introducing abandoned sports and other activities; The living conditions to be made available for the resident population in the Campus, i.e students and staff, by way of acceptable standards of accommodation, nutritional food and recreation; The recruitment and disciplinary control of the staff and minor staff and their levels of competence and achievement are pertinent matters which our Group discussed at length at our last Meeting, **having special regard to the ideals set forth by the Founding Fathers tempered by the realities of today and the acceptance of certain inevitable circumstances in the ground situation, but not forgetting certain minimum standards at least to be maintained** together with the basic norms of the Hayman era and rich Thomian Traditions. All of these matters have been referred to in our Confidential Report of October 2001. These matters we find are also adverted to frequently by serious minded Old Boys from time to time at Meetings of the Ex-Committees and Annual General Meetings. **What causes us concern is that one is left with the indelible impression that little or nothing has been done by the Management and Administration of the school with regard to most of the matters coming under these heads which have caused concern to us as old boys though conditions have kept on deteriorating. The unanimous view was that the OBA must assert its right to have a say in these matters which go to the root or the core of the continued well being of college.** There is no point in having an OBA if the College itself is on its way to nowhere. **If College is depending on its Old Boys for its sustenance, Old boys naturally must have a say in the running.** Perusing Minutes of previous AGM's it is pretty obvious the OBA has been able to put its foot down when necessary and taken on the Manager, and even the Board of Governors to task. Fortunately the present persons holding those offices are reasonable people and we do not see any cause for alarm, conflict or concern. If the OBA pulls their chestnuts out of the fire they will only be too happy. Let them take the credit. Let us do the work and be satisfied. We have made a pretty good start. **What concerns us is the student**

who is admitted, goes through College and the product that comes out. Is he a True Thomian, does he imbibe Thomian Traditions, can we be proud to call him a Thomian. (or do we feel alienated) If the final product is not satisfactory, then we are wasting our time, energy and money. Now that there is no need to run behind the Board of Governors or the Manager in order to develop the College, it is best we, with the good-will of the Head Master and the blessings of the Bishop and Board of Governors continue to work with the Head Master in a cordial atmosphere giving him all the advice and support he needs to carry out his most difficult task.”

And at page 18/19 we stated:-

*“We would also like to make a pertinent observation that the OBA should use some gentle persuasion tactfully, to assert its right with regard to an important matter that had been referred to at the first meeting of the executive committee. **Contributing millions of Rupees for Development Work of an institution which has no clear vision or direction is to our mind utterly foolhardy.** Almost all members of our group who wish to make contributions financially and otherwise were very keen that our Association take a keen interest in finding out the cause for the deterioration. **All of them are interested in making sacrifices only if the college can be brought back to something similar to the Hayman era. Considering the present trends we feel it will be very difficult if not impossible to maintain the well known standards and traditions which we speak so much of.** We would not wish to waste our time, energy etc, being involved with College if it is only to benefit a very limited segment of society. We find hardly any student is actively interested in proceeding to STC Mount. It is necessary to collect some data on the current student population. We can base it on the Profile of Student population, somewhat similar to what was done about a decade ago and whose results/findings are in the History of STC Guru edited by Mr.Oliver de Soya. Today’s position, we are quite sure cannot be better. We know past Head Masters have each of them had their own priorities, Agendas and Idiosyncrasies. Should we not have serious deliberations on both those matters. Whilst we do not wish to be snobbish these matters do require discussion by our membership, at least those interested, and eventually proceed along the best course of action. We should involve the Head Master at some stage of those deliberations. He is during his stewardship undoubtedly the most important individual who charts the course of College. He may succeed or he may fail. We can, all of us give him the benefit of our collective advise, guidance and expertise. To ignore what the likes of Mr. Bradman Weerakoon, Mr. Ronnie Weerakoon, Mr. P.S. Duleep Kumar, Mr. L.W.A. Fernando, Mr. Sisira Nanayakkara , Mr.Bandula Wanigasekera, Brig B Munasinghe and a host of other caring and concerned products, “giants” of our College, really, have to say would be foolish. **Let us therefore listen, discuss and then chart the course.** We do not think we should be blindly led on these matters. It is too much to be left to chance. **We have seen what happens when numbers are increased indiscriminately and students are admitted without any screening;** etc etc. Guru was meant to be a Boarding School. It was undoubtedly the best*

Boarding School in all of Sri Lanka at one time.- for a long time. Not any more. Unless that attitude and vision are changed none of us will eventually get any satisfaction in what we are doing. It is best that all be informed of this and corrective steps taken before generous and willing Members pour in their hard-earned monies to an Institution which we are not going to be proud of to associate with. These are matters on which several Old Boys (not only of our Group) wish to have a discussion; a frank discussion. Some members are not in the Ex-Co. We feel it is best we organize same very early and invite persons who can make worthwhile contributions.”

15. I compiled, produced and circulated the above 10 Newsletters upto early 2002 with a view to install an enlightened Ex- Co which would try to extricate College from its sorry plight which was extensively outlined. A Historic AGM took place in February 2002 with a record turn out. Old boys who had not visited Guru after they left College in 1962 turned up on my invitation. One of them spent millions subsequently in single handedly repairing the entire block of Senior Dormitories. With the installation in office of a new and vibrant Ex-Co in March 2002 I compiled, produced and sponsored 5 official Newsletters of the OBA, participated at all Meetings of the Ex-Co in Colombo and at Gurutalawa and in all other activities connected with the OBA and College. A perusal of the College diary of events as well as the Minute Books of the Ex-Co during the period March 2002 to February 2003 will bear ample testimony to the volume of extraordinary work, the effort, the energy and the financial input of those involved in a sincere attempt to revive the OBA and through it the College.

16. During the period March 2002 and February 2003 we submitted extensive Reports to the Headmaster through the OBA dated June 03,2003; July 26,2002; October 31,2002 (2); November 10,2002; December 17 & 18 2002; December 27,2002; January 6 & 7, 2003; January 15,2003; January 18,2003 and March 06,2004. An additional report was submitted by Fr.Mervyn Fernando whom we took to Gurutalawa on November 18,2002. These were all in connection with various aspects of life and activities at Gurutalawa which needed remedial action. These were all minuted of record, but sadly not much positive action materialized at Gurutalawa.

It must be remembered that this enormous and extraordinary volume of work was done by a handful of dedicated old boys. Their voices were however not heard in the upper echelons. Warped messages having been sent to the Board of Governors, perhaps that all was well. And hence too little was done too late.

17. We wrote to the Bishop on October 21, 2002, as follows

“The Ex-Co of the OBA has met on April 8, May 17, June 15, July 19, September 05 and October 05,2002. I have sent you copies of the Minutes of all these Meetings for your reference and records and to keep you (and through you the Board of Governors)

informed and apprised of our activities, particularly with regard to development work at Gurutalawa.

I did so because to my mind there is unfortunately a hiatus between the Ex-Co of the OBA as presently constituted and (its representation on) the Board of Governors (not taking into account the Headmaster who is President in an ex-officio capacity) and hence the need to keep all concerned in the higher echelons accurately informed of the OBA activities.

I trust all the relevant Minutes are now available with you.

Also enclosed please find extracts of minutes from meetings of the previous Ex-Co's since 1996 and the AGM's since 1997 (the minutes from the inauguration ie 1959 to 1996 have been misplaced by some previous office bearers.

Our focus was on some of those matters for reasons that are obvious.

I also enclose herewith copies of correspondence (particularly as regards development activities in the school) which we have had with the Headmaster at Gurutalawa (with whom we have very cordial working relationship and who is assured of our full backing). You will observe that we have accomplished a fair amount of work. However, much remains to be done. We hope to conclude a fair amount of the balance development activities at Gurutalawa before the end of February 2003 ie the next AGM.

I will be happy to make available any further information you may wish to have."

18. We also wrote to the Bishop's Office on January 03,2003

"The Ex-Co of the OBA has met on April 08, May 17, June 15, July 19, September 05, October 05, November 7 & 29, 2002. Enclosed are copies of the Minutes. The Ex-Co has every 3rd Meeting at Gurutalawa. The next Meeting of the Ex-Co on January 11,2003 will be at Gurutalawa.

The Headmaster has attended almost all the Meetings of the Ex-Co, The Meetings at Gurutalawa have produced good results and brought about better interaction between the OBA on the one hand and the Headmaster, his staff and the students of the College on the other.

*Minutes of previous Meetings were sent earlier to the Bishop and we continue the practice of sending same for your reference and records and also to keep His Lordship the Bishop and through him the Board of Governors informed and apprised of our activities, **particularly with regard to development work at Gurutalawa. The role of the OBA in the Board of Governors is clearly accepted in the statute.** In practical terms it's importance in the life of the college is significant.*

Another reason to send these Minutes is because there is unfortunately a hiatus or lacuna between the Ex-Co of the OBA as presently constituted and its representation on the Board of Governors (not taking into

account the Headmaster who is President in an ex-officio capacity) and the need to keep all concerned in the higher echelons of the administration of College accurately informed of the OBA activities. Hence the need to send those Minutes etc.

Also enclosed please find extracts of minutes from meetings of the previous Ex-Co's since 1996 and the AGM's since 1997 (the Minutes from the inauguration i.e 1959-1996 have been misplaced by some previous office bearers).

The focus of the current Ex-Co has naturally been inter alia on some of those matters for reasons that are obvious. Extracts of the Meeting of the current Ex-Co on the corresponding subjects are also enclosed.

I also enclose herewith copies of correspondence (particularly as regards development activities in the school) which we have had with the Headmaster of Gurutalawa (with whom we have a cordial working relationship and who is assured of our full backing).

Also enclosed a brief summary of the activities of the OBA since March 02,2002. You will observe that we have accomplished a fair amount of work. However, much remains to be done. We hope to conclude a fair amount of the balance development activities at Gurutalawa before the end of February 2003.

You are probably aware that consequent to my campaign to create a sense of awareness of the tragic situation at Gurutalawa many of my friends and contemporaries rallied round college and the OBA. One of my contemporaries spent over Rs.1.5 Million single handed on refurbishing the Senior Dorms within a period of 06 weeks by taking all Engineers, Labourers and materials from Colombo, at a time the Board promised the Headmaster funds to do the roof only and that too of one dorm in 6 months time.

Most members of the current Ex-Co are presently engaged in discussions as to whether the development work undertaken by the OBA alone will be sufficient so as to revive the College and restore it to its former glory. The answer is an emphatic No.

In this exercise, necessarily core issues which are related to the vicious circle the College is caught up in and the way to emancipation and relief is being gone into. The role the OBA will be permitted to play in this aspect becomes all the more important and unless a genuine hearing is given and reasonable solutions are found, it will be the view of most concerned Old Boys that all their efforts have been an exercise in futility

and the OBA can only serve to act as a medium for Old Boys to enjoy Fellowship.

In this area we look forward to your understanding and support.....”

- 19. The Executive Committees that were elected in February 2003 and February 2004 continued in this vein and endeavoured to the best of their ability to take forward this process but with limited success. There appeared to be a road block, perhaps the Manager or the Headmaster. The rot that had set in was too deep rooted. Scores of Old Boys who had rallied around and given millions in finance, their time, energy, and sacrificed personal comforts etc, gave up in frustration, despair and disgust and walked away from the campaign to revive College.**
- 20. In April, 2004 several Old Boys who were strongly behind the OBA demanded that the OBA exert pressure and their influence with the Board more effectively in order to have corrective measures put in place immediately. These Old Boys made it clear that there was no point in continuing to virtually subsidise Gurutalawa unless a viable plan was put in place for its future, that the Board did not appear to be seriously interested in this aspect and the Old Boys would be wasting their efforts. The OBA then took a decision that they would make one last attempt to persuade the Board to take action. They submitted to the Bishop representations in the following terms.**

“ These past two years, we the OBA have done all that we could within our limits and abilities and we have now reached a stage that further remedial measures required are beyond our competence and impinge on the administration of the School, strictly within the ambit and scope of the Headmaster, the Manager, and the Board’s responsibility.

We are therefore making this representation to you, as Chairman of the Board of Governors to initiate, with minimum delay, such action as is required. In our view, in the first instance, it is felt advisable, to investigate in depth the School’s functioning in the areas we have highlighted in these submission s under broad heads.

Further, any investigation should also look into:

- *The School & Boarding Fees: The present adequacy, allowing that this is the only income, and number of students that can be accommodated on the present infrastructure and steps taken to increase the number of students.*
- *The Security Service: Whether the expense incurred is justified and whether it should be replaced by an organization with no connection*

or links to present staff, at all levels, for better security and internal discipline.

Finally, we would state that the fall in numbers on the roll, is clear evidence of the lack of confidence, the public and parents, have in the School – that is the lack of concern for the welfare of the students, the entrenched indiscipline at all levels the failure to face up to issues with firm resolve – these being indicative of a lack of coherence in the Managements’ vision for the School, if any, and the Managements abandonment of responsibility to the machinations of elements within the School and who have no love for it and have absolutely no sensibility to its ethos, which was endowed and nurtured by its Founders and the traditions set, but only pursue their agenda of personal advancement.

We are very apprehensive that if no action is taken, the School would grind to a halt, one way or another, if it does not collapse suddenly like a house of cards, though it could possibly limp along as a monumental travesty of what it was and meant to be.”

21. For too long those who acted as the conduit between the College and Board of Governors had painted a wrong picture of College and not revealed the true state of affairs. In this background the Headmaster retired prematurely.

22. The Bishop at an assembly in the College Hall on October 05,2004 immediately after the induction of the present Headmaster is said to have, according to the College web site,

“Apologised for any remissness of the Board in not paying sufficient attention to Gurutalawa and expressed his thanks to the Old Boys. He promised the establishment of a new culture in a new beginning in a unified community where there would be no place for aggressive acts of violence, and called for the restitution of discipline as a core value.”

23. The Headmaster in presenting his Report at the AGM of the OBA on February 26,2005 said:-

“ At present the student population is 322 including 10 students at the Kiddies play school resumed this month. The school is hemorrhaging cash in excess of Rs.300,000/- per mensem and the gap widening through a vicious cycle. The over draft of Rs.3.0 Million at Seylan Bank is almost utilized and very difficult to meet the day to day expenses on a regular basis.

<i>Viz</i>	
<i>Staff Salaries per month</i>	<i>950,000.00</i>
<i>Prep duty allowance</i>	<i>18,000.00</i>

There is an arrears of Rs.4.5 Million accumulated over the years. Letters were sent to the respective parties and only Rs.300 was recovered. The balance has to be written off. There was another arrears of 2.0 Million of the present and the immediate past students, out of which we were able to recover about 1.1 million. Stringent measures have been taken to recover the balance 0.9 million very soon. There is an arrears of Rs.500,000/- in the form of invoices to be settled in 2004/2005.”

If one peruses the Reports of the Headmasters presented at the School Prize Givings and also at the AGM’s of the OBA over the past decade one will find that this is an oft repeated problem. Arrears of School Fees by the current students is equally bad. When questioned at the AGM of the OBA on February 26,2005 as regards the current situation relating to the settlement/payment of fees by students the Headmaster informed the membership that as at that date about 40% of the students had not paid fees for the Term. ACCORDING TO SUBSEQUENT FIGURES GIVEN BY HIM ALMOST RS.1,235,000/- IS OUTSTANDING AS ARREARS OF FEES FROM CURRENT STUDENTS. In this context the arrears of 4.5 Million referred to by him which have accumulated over the years is not so bad. This is a serious problem due cognizance of which the Board of Governors must take in discussing the future of Gurutalawa. CAN THIS SCHOOL RUN WITH A FEES DEFAULTING STUDENT POPULATION OF THE MAGNITUDE AS IS AVAILABLE NOW.

24. The Bishop in a letter dated March 16,2005 written immediately after a Meeting of the Board of Governors at which it had apparently transpired that unless immediate steps are taken to solve the financial crisis College would have to be closed down states:

“As you know, S.Thomas’ Gurutalawa was founded on a farm gifted by the late Leslie de Saram. The vision of the founders was that it would be a unique boarding school providing a well-rounded education and building boys with leadership qualities and character through a variety of activities in the classroom and on the farm and playing fields. Over the years, particularly over the last decade or so, the character of the school has changed and it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain financial viability in its present form.

The Board of Governors therefore needs to take some major decisions to enable the school to continue to provide the unique educational blend that was the vision of the founders, adapted to today’s needs and challenges. In order to assist the Board in this task, we are arranging a series of meetings, with the first planned for 29th March 2005 at 6 p.m in the Board Room (Warden’s Office) at Mount Lavinia.

The objective of these meetings would be to assemble all those interested in Gurutalawa to discuss available options and initiate short and long-term plans, identify key people to be involved in these plans, mark milestones and enlist the support of the wider Thomian family.

In view of your interest in Gurutalawa, I am happy to invite you to the first meeting in order that we may collectively participate in this vital and important stage in the life of S.Thomas College, Gurutalawa”

We have set out above a glimpse from the past leading right up to the present. One cannot truly appreciate the current position without having some knowledge of the background which is set out above. It would not be unreasonable to ascertain why the request of the OBA and Old Boys with regard to the matters set out above have not been given due attention or consideration. Can it be said that the Board was all this time unaware or that the Manager covered up the true position to such an extent that the Board was in the dark. I feel an honest answer is owing. Otherwise the bona-fides of any future plans inclusive of interim plans, merely in order to tide over current serious financial difficulties or having reached/exhausted the overdraft limits will be questionable.

The Present and the Future

In response to the Bishop’s invitation we wish to place the following matters for the consideration of all concerned having been involved with the situation at Gurutalawa closely over the last few years.

25. Representation on the Board of Governors

We repeat what we have stated over and over again. College must have proper representation on the Board of Governors. In our Newsletter No.9 of March 19,2002 we quoted the following Rules of the Board of Governors with regard to the composition of the Board at pages 24 and 25

1. *Constitution of the Board*
The Board shall consist of fifteen (15) members, that is to say
- 1.4 *One Representative from the Old Boys’ Association of the Branch Schools at Gurutalawa, Bandarawela and Kollupitiya elected by those Associations from among their members in the following manner.....*
- 1.5.2 *One person elected by an electoral college under the Chairmanship of the Hony. Secretary of the Board of Governors consisting of representatives of the Staff made up as follows:*

Two from the tutorial and administration staffs of each of the Branch schools at Gurutalawa, Bandarawela and Kollupitiya

1.9 *Such other persons not exceeding four in number who shall be co-opted by resolution of the Board ensuring that at least eighty percent of the members shall be members of the Church of Ceylon or of a church in communion with that church as required by Section 3 (1) (b) of the S.Thomas' College Board of Governors Ordinance No. 7 of 1930.*

And most important at page 28 we quoted from the Rules of the Board of Governors

24. *The Board may amend these Rules at an Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting provided that at least 10 clear days notice of such amendment has been given to all members of the Board. The Board may amend these rules by a simple majority of members present and voting.*

Thus there has been nothing whatsoever to prevent the Board of Governors from giving proper and equal treatment to the branch schools. Sadly this has not happened.

26. Management and Administration

Should the Board of Governors delegate some part of its functions with regard to Management and Administration of College to another body. Could this be a Committee of carefully selected experts amongst old boys and well wishers who will involve themselves together with the Headmaster in all day to day activities particularly of the boarding and the school.

The Role the Manager has played in the last few years is best left unsaid. Can the office of Manager, Accountant, Administration Officer all be rolled in to one Resident Officer who will keep the Board in the true picture. Although the OBA succeeded in pushing through the acceptance of the Office of Administration Officer and agreed to pay one half of his salary, the OBA was left out of the selection process. This was not fair. The persons selected as Administration Officer and Accountant by a Committee headed by the Manager of the College have both left Gurutalawa in circumstances “not very healthy”.

Could in the alternative these functions be allotted to a Management Company, in which perhaps old boys or well wishers have a close interest so that their expertise is are available.

All these changes can be made with the present Rules of the Board as hereunder which we have quoted at pages 27 and 28 of the said Newsletter No.09.

19.1 *Control and Management of School*

The Board shall be responsible for the control and management of S.Thomas' College, Mt.Lavinia, and the Branch Schools, and for the erection and maintenance of suitable buildings, and in all such matters consult the Heads of Schools in such manner as to give them full opportunity for the expression of their views.

20. *Advisory Committee*

There shall be an Advisory Committee for each College/Branch School appointed annually by the Board. The Chairman of the Committee who shall be a member of the Board, shall be nominated by his Lordship the Bishop, and shall also function as the Manager of the College/School. The Advisory Committee, which shall be responsible to the Board, shall perform such functions as may be delegated to it by the Board from time to time

27. **Character of the School**

One matter which needs consideration is whether College should be continued in keeping with the vision of the founders having regard to the changes that have taken place in our country since 1942. In this context we note with interest the observation made by the Bishop that **“over the last decade or so the character of the school has changed and it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain Financial viability in its present form.”** It would also appear that the Board of Governors has acknowledged the need to take some **“major decisions”** to enable the school **“to continue to provide the unique educational blend that was the vision of the founders adopted to todays needs and challenges”**. Rule 10 of the Board of Governors which we have quoted at page 26 of our said Newsletter No.9 states:-

“S.Thomas' College, Mt.Lavinia and the Branch Schools shall be day and boarding schools for boys and shall be maintained and managed in suitable buildings provided and approved by the Board.”

In todays context having a boarding school at Gurutalawa cut away from any town is in itself not very attractive. One can see how numbers have dropped in the boarding. It will undoubtedly continue to decline. Apart from that there are a fair number of girls in this boys school.

With Prep School- Bandarawela going on to have classes from Yr.6 upwards the need for Primary Classes of their own was felt by Gurutalwa and this gave birth to Keble. Unfortunately, though there should be around 300 students at Keble from Year 1 to Year 5 the number on the roll is a mere 80 of whom 15 are concessionary students. Thus, it cannot be said that Keble has taken the place of Prep School, Bandarawela. Prep School, Bandarawela had cricket, hockey, soccer, and swimming, teams of their own which competed with other schools. Today's Keble is a far cry from such standards and displays a pathetic degradation. Parents of boys at Keble have complained that they do not even get a tennis ball as a sports facility.

In August 2001, 99 students were admitted to College. There were 453 students on the Roll. 299 of them were boarders. There were 109 employees. The proportion of students to employees was 4:1. The total expenditure on account of Salaries, EPF, ETF and Overtime alone exceeded Rs.715,000/-. The boarding food bill exceeded Rs.525,000/- The School Fees was Rs.1500/- per mensem The boarding fees was Rs.2000/-. The total income from School and Boarding fees was Rs.1,225,000/-.

In June 2002 once again the same group of Old Boys with the concurrence of the Headmaster Mr.Geethal Mendis did a study and put out a Profile of the College. The new admission to college had dropped significantly. The student population had dropped to 413. The number of boarders was 281. However, there was no drop in the number of paid employees and the wage bill had increased. The total income was Rs.1,275,000/-. A large percentage of students did not pay fees on time. The monthly expenditure amounted to Rs.1,600,000/-.

Today College has 294 Students. Of them 29 students are on very moderate concessionary terms. 197 are boarders. Since submitting our Confidential Report of October 2001 numbers have dropped by almost 160. This is disastrous and suicidal. The total number of employees is now said to be 99. The proportion of students to employees is now more i.e 3:1. The boarding fees charged is Rs.2500/- per mensem. The school fees is Rs.2200/- per mensem. The total wage bill for February 2005 is however said to be Rs.1,079,968/-. This shows an increase. So whilst Income continues to fall the Expenditure keeps mounting.

One can just imagine the frustration and anguish of members of the Academic Staff and Minor Staff at Grutalawa when they wonder at the beginning of each month how and whether their salaries will be paid at the end of that month. No one can expect teachers to carry out their work properly and freely if this worry is uppermost in their minds. Today the fear of Staff Retrenchment pervades the corridors of Gurutalawa.

There are several problems that College faces. However, the problem that has brought about this Meeting relates to finance. College is not earning enough money to meet its expenses. This is not a problem that arose this month. It existed as far back as 2001. Fortunately, trees grown by the benefactors and Founding Fathers were available for harvesting. A few holiday camps came in handy. Overdraft balances were thus reduced and wage bills and boarding expenses could be met. The OBA and Old Boys chipped in from time to time. The OBA negotiated a greatly reduced interest rate from 24% to 8% on the overdraft at the Bank.

The problem in a nutshell is as above. The source of income is school fees and boarding fees. The heavy items of expenditure are the wage bill and the

boarding expenses. To this must be added cost of electricity, water, telephone, security, vehicle maintenance, sports expenses etc,. With the reduction of the number of students on the roll without a corresponding reduction in the wage bill the monthly deficit keeps mounting.

The College charges each student Rs.83/- per day for Food and Accommodation. This covers all meals for the day; the cost of the groceries etc; the cost of preparing food; the wages of the kitchen, the dining hall, pantry, serving, cleaning, and washing staff; the cost of water and electricity; the wages of the staff cleaning the dorms, the toilets and the upkeep of the gardens; the maintenance, repair and upkeep of the water supply and distribution system, the telephone system, and the electrical system, the dorms, the toilets, the dining hall, the pantry, the kitchen, staff quarters, the road network, the storm water drainage system, and the sports facilities; wages of the administration staff involved in the running of the boarding, and the security, cost of fuel, maintenance and upkeep of motor vehicles; the maintenance of the sick room etc,. Compared to the boarding expenses it is clear the boarding fees charged is totally out of proportion, and without a proper costing exercise.

The College charges even less per day for providing the academic side of school life. That is approximately Rs.70/- per day from each student. This must cover the Salaries, EPF, ETF, Pensions, Special Allowances and Incentives, Security, maintenance upkeep and repair of class rooms, their furniture and fittings, the laboratory, and the library etc, The wage bill alone of the employees and staff in this sector will be totally out of proportion with the school fees charged.

Is the College to admit students from a different social background to what is available now. In which case should not the quality of the staff, the total infrastructure, the facilities, the food etc, be completely upgraded to satisfy such students. To do so how are the finances to be found. What admission, building fund, boarding fees and school fees should be levied. Is Gurutalawa to be considered on the same lines as the other 03 schools or should it be elevated by bringing in outside capital to improve the infra structure etc. Will these changes be in keeping with the concept of the Christian Missionary School that was envisaged, or reek of a Business Enterprise.

Even if all these improvements are made will affluent parents from Colombo and other cities be willing to send their sons to Gurutalawa in an age when International Schools of very high standing are available in Colombo which prepare students for foreign exams, employment and careers tailored mostly for foreign countries.

On the other hand should college simply continue on the same lines as now, catering to a very socially and financially backward part of society. It is an

open secret that Gurutalawa is a home for unwanted Children from broken homes, children whose parents are employed in the middle east etc etc. One Headmaster informed the OBA membership at an AGM recently that 60% of the students were from single parent homes. This is very high. This category of students cannot and do not settle their school and boarding fees on time. Yet, because of the conditions available at Gurutalawa they are the only students who are willing to join . If these students are sent packing for non payment of fees, then will such harsh measures be counterproductive. There may be no other type of students to seek admission.

28. The Infra-Structure

The infra-structure of the College is in bad shape. A fair number of buildings are in a dilapidated state. For those who have not, do not or cannot, travel to Gurutalawa, I am prepared to show the pictures captured on video of almost the entire campus by a Professional Cameraman. With regard to the infra structure particularly some of the old buildings, there are those who wish to retain the architecture. There are others who consider some of the edifices as eye sores. Eg: the chummary, the old kitchen, the old lab where Dr.Hayman used to preside etc. All shades of opinions must be considered. One important suggestion we have made is the entrustment to a committee to handle this subject, so that neither the OBA nor an Old Boy does ad-hoc development work in College without regard to the overall architecture etc. This should be so even in the case of repairs, refurbishment. There must be some uniformity. The new dining hall and administration block took more than 10 years to complete. Nobody knows exactly how much money was spent. Not even 1/5th of the administration floor is used for the purpose for which it was built. A few generous Old Boys with a good heart constructed the new kitchen for the new dining hall spending a tidy sum of money. The kitchen staff refuse to make use thereof because of technical problems. They still use the Old Kitchen. The same can be said of the Bio Gas Project of the OBA. These situations could be avoided if development work is not undertaken haphazardly, is co-ordinated with those who should be responsible in College and receives the guidance of skilled Professional personnel.

29. Staff, Discipline, Accommodation, Studies, Food, Sports Etc

Close upon the financial viability, management matters and the infra-structure one must study the situation relating to discipline, studies, teaching standards, sports facilities, food, accommodation, and related matters which are closely related to and interconnected with each other, and take necessary steps for improvement.

The OBA and Old Boys have always come forward and helped College generously. Most of the buildings and sports facilities constructed as well as totally refurbished recently have been by old boys. Equipment for the Laboratory,

Books and Journals for the Library, Computers for IT, Sports Equipment, Furniture for the Class Room, the repair and replacement of expensive and vital components of College vehicles, Health camps, Leadership camps, Repairs to Pool Equipment, Repairs to Wells, Water Tanks, Water lines, and Pumps, Garden Landscaping, Squash, Badminton, and Basket ball Courts, Dormitories are some of the areas old boys have assisted.

When one walks through the campus one wanders if not for the OBA and the old boys, where would this College be. Have the Board of Governors made any significant contribution in proportion to that of the Old Boys financially towards development of College, during the last decade. Most of the buildings that have come up have been through the good offices of the OBA.

Despite all this, the Secretary of the OBA has said in his report of January 31,2003

*“Yet for all that we realize that we have barely scratched the surface of the problems of the school. This is a matter ultimately for the Headmaster and the Board of Governors. We have in our endeavours highlighted some of the problems. The quotation from Browning which prefaced this report recognizes that we have no illusions about fulfilling our own vision. Our grasp has been way shorter than our reach but for all that **“there are promises to keep and miles to go before we sleep”** and we hope that every Old Boy who values what he has received from the school will join in the journey whoever is at the helm of affairs in the OBA this coming year and in the future.”*

We set out below matters which we have repeatedly pointed out need attention but have not been satisfactorily resolved or implemented, so that they could be, even at this late stage, taken into consideration for implementation as part of the plans for the future of the College.

1. Admission of students must be at the discretion of the Headmaster. The role now being played by the Headmaster’s Secretary must be suspended. The allocation of the Dormitory/House should be left to the Headmaster. Mothers being interviewed by members of the staff prior to admission should not be permitted.
2. All recognised schools advertise in the papers around February/March calling for applications, for the following year. This procedure is done in a systematic manner. In the case of Gurutalawa any student from year 1 to year 11 could be admitted on any day of the year with a simple test and bringing with him his mattress and his almyrah. Gurutalawa is truly unique in this respect. There is no other school in Sri Lanka where one can get admission any day of the year. Nobody has been turned away. This alone speaks volumes of the standard. In fact there are cases reported of students who have been sacked from Trinity College and other schools for drug abuse, being welcomed with open arms by

the Headmaster at Gurutalawa. It is also reported that hundreds of students who seek admission to S.Thomas Bandarawela but who are not successful, when advised by that Headmaster to try Gurutalawa, smile and turn away in rejection. Unfortunately, none of the parents have taken the advice seriously. The reputation earned by Gurutalawa is so bad. Students seeking admission to Gurutalawa must be informed that what is offered is an all-round education and not mere book learning. The students must be able financially to pay the fees, unless of course the Church is willing to subsidise or sponsor. Reverting to the OBA and old boys to help out regularly may not be very successful. In most other schools where this system is successful parents and old pupils participate in the scheme in order to win points to get their own children in or because their children are already in school so that it would benefit them. As far as Gurutalawa is concerned it is difficult to find an old boy who wishes to send his son to his old school. Even members of the Ex-Co of the OBA send their sons to International Schools or Private Schools in Colombo.

3. Students should be carefully screened before admission. Children of minor employees being admitted as concessionary students should be given careful consideration. The financial capacity and back ground of the parent or guardian must be ascertained. The immunization record must be called for. A file must be maintained for each student. A record must be made therein of his progress through school relating to academic , sports, extra curricular, health and other matters.
4. The practice of requesting new students to bring their furniture must be suspended.
5. The Head Master should advise parents of students seeking admission that life in the boarding school is to make the student a complete man when the time comes for him to leave school, that the student is not only expected to perform at his best in studies, but also participate in games and sports activities as well as other activities of various societies.
6. The Head Master should not try to admit all and every student seeking admission simply because the College needs money or there are dorms which are unoccupied. Careful consideration should be given to admission of students for Montessori. Previously when this Project was not successful these young children were thereafter absorbed to Year One due to lack of numbers in the Montessori, and this gave rise to certain problems and criticism. This same point must be remembered in any plan to commence Advance Level Classes. It would be good to consider and pay heed to the experience and advise of members of the staff with almost 30 years experience and who are even now available on the Ex-Co of the OBA. It is better to have manageable numbers and concentrate on quality, as envisaged by the Founding Fathers.

7. The accommodation provided in the dormitories as well as the toilet facilities need much improvement and have been the subject of comment at many AGM's of the OBA. Most of the roofs of the dormitories need urgent attention. The asbestos sheets are now old and brittle. The beds also need to be ordered anew. Normal lockers should be adequate with students bringing in their clothes in trunks or suitcases. Almyrahs, Cupboards and Clothes Racks must be dispensed with. The beds must be arranged in orderly fashion with either a College or House Bed spread used. Monies taken for the Building Fund could be utilized for this purpose.
8. Immediate steps must be taken to appoint competent House or Dorm Masters who must be accommodated adjacent to their respective dorms and together with the Prefects be made to assist the Head Master in keeping the Dorms clean and tidy and also maintaining discipline and eliminating vandalism.
9. Dorms should be provided with basic facilities e.g tables or lockers for reading/ writing etc. The Head Master and the House Master and even the Chaplain, should Visit the Dorms and speak to the boarders during night room time, going from student to student making it a point to talk to them, get to know them better, making reference to events of the day as well as events planned in the days ahead.
10. This is very important and we would strongly recommend the adoption of this practice. Left in isolation by parents and the school they will grow up with a grudge. Immense benefit will accrue to these students by displaying an attitude of caring.
11. The House system must be re-introduced without any delay. Boarders must be accommodated in dorms in accordance with their Houses, not classes. The importance of this for a boarding school has been repeatedly stressed. The original system of housing boarders, "House" wise and not "Class" wise should be restored. As numbers fall whether Dorms should be occupied at half strength, is also a matter to be considered.
12. No boisterous activity should be permitted during room-time.
13. The Head Master should also off and on do a tour in the night after lights out of the Dorms and other sensitive areas to ensure discipline is maintained.
14. The quality of food must be improved and be palatable. The Food Committee must be revived. The Food Matron must adhere to the Diet Chart which was obtained from a Nutrition Expert and handed over by the OBA to the Headmaster and adjustments made when necessary particularly for the Primary Section. The canteen should not be a fall-back food outlet of the College Boarding. After all, Rs.2500/- is paid on account of food and accommodation and instances of parents having paid the person running the

canteen Rs.3000/- on account of lunch and dinner supplied to a student is unacceptable.

15. The Head Master should visit the Co-op and Canteen and ensure the availability of essential items as well as the quality of the food and drink provided.
16. All boarders must sit to meal time together. Meals at 2 sittings could be suspended immediately as the Dining Hall can accommodate the present number in the Boarding at one sitting. Accordingly, the double intervals for Lunch and Tea could be amalgamated. Sufficient tables and seating accommodation have already been provided for this purpose. The Headmaster and House Masters should all sit for meals with the boarders in the dining hall, and grace must be said by the Chaplain or Headmaster or Head Prefect or a Prefect before and after the meal. The canteen atmosphere now prevailing must be removed.
17. The Head Master should have at least his noon meal and dinner with the students and the staff as did Dr. Hayman and Fr. Foster and not in isolation at his bungalow. Minor Staff should not eat before the students. Pilfering of groceries and cooked food must be prevented. Dogs must be eliminated from the Dining Rooms. Arrangements must be continued for the supplier to deliver groceries to College and avoid the College vehicles from being used and misused on this pretext.
18. The Head Master should inspect the kitchen and pantry areas at least 2 to 3 times during the week and ensure that food is prepared under hygienic conditions.
19. The non-availability of suitable laundry facilities is a drawback. This has resulted in the ugly spectacle of washed clothes being hung to dry on trees, bushes and lawns. The expansion of dormitories in order to accommodate cupboards, almyrahs and clothes racks and the requirement that new admissions bring with them these items of furniture has added to 1/4th of almost every dormitory being reserved to accommodate furniture and the orderliness, uniformity and purpose with which the dormitories were arranged, being lost. If proper laundry facilities are available where clothes are washed, ironed and returned weekly, the above eyesore could be removed.
20. All boarders and resident staff must be required to participate in sports or some other activity between 4.00 and 6.00 p.m. None should be permitted to remain in dormitories which should be locked. For this purpose suitable time tables of sports and extra curricular activities should be drawn up. Students should not be allowed to loiter around. They must be gainfully occupied. The re-introduction of House Jersey etc, will help to identify the students. At the moment, there is no uniform sports attire.

21. Parents of Students complain about the lack of sports facilities, the absence of masters from class, and the poor standard of teaching in English. Surprisingly some of these complaints are lodged by the members of the minor staff.
22. Swimming should be permitted only in proper swimming trunks not in baggy shorts etc
23. Wherever possible the sports facilities and equipment and extra curricular activities should be improved. Cross-Country runs with the Headmaster and other members of the staff joining him would give a boost to discipline, morale and send a message to the villagers around.
24. The Head Master should also visit in turn all areas where sports activities are supposed to take place to find out whether students are taking part and the Master in Charge is present.
25. The Head Master should ensure that all students participate in some game or sports activities during the hours meant therefor. An effort must be made to revive games/sports which have been abandoned.
26. The Head Master should pay surprise visits to observe the proceedings of various Societies and encourage their activities.
27. The standard of discipline amongst the staff, students and minor staff need much improvement.
28. The Head Master should during the time the school is in session make his presence felt in the class room area so that those members of the tutorial staff who have played truant are on their toes.
29. The Head Master should visit the venue where morning and night prep takes place to ensure that the master in charge and the prefect on duty are present.
30. All students must attend important events in the College calendar including the Sports meet and the Prize Giving. The practice of parents arriving from the early hours of the morning and departing with their sons whilst only the Prize Winners and their parents are left behind to participate in the Prize Giving is unacceptable. All members of the staff even those non-resident should attend the Sports Meet and similar activities. Students must maintain pin drop silence during the Prize Giving. Chattering and throwing paper balls at each other whilst the Chief Guest makes his address is not in keeping with Thomian traditions, values, and behaviour and is disrespectful to the Chief Guest.

31. All day scholars, non-resident members of the staff and minor staff should enter and leave the campus only through the main gate. Security should not permit entry or exit from elsewhere.
32. Any acts of gross indiscipline must be punished by having the student removed from school.
33. The Head Master should groom good student material well ahead so that they could be appointed student leaders and prefects to help him maintain order and discipline, not only in Senior/Junior Dorms but also in classrooms, during games and meal times etc,etc.
34. The Head Master should enforce the Out of Bounds rule for all areas and paths adjacent to the wells from which water for all purposes is drawn.
35. The staff who are resident on the campus must be required to obtain the Headmaster's permission before leaving the campus even for a short while. They should not be permitted to entertain lady visitors in their bachelors' quarters. This has led to a lot of abuse and it is an open secret amongst students as well as staff at Gurutalawa, that immoral activities were the order of the day.
36. Boarders should not be permitted outside the Campus at whatever time. Day scholars should not be permitted outside the Campus during school hours. Often students are found in the village and around boutiques. Students are even sent on errands by masters to bring cigarettes. Day scholars must be provided with a suitable place to have their meals, and not permitted to leave the campus during the intervals from above the class rooms block to boutiques in close proximity. This rule must be strictly enforced and anybody flouting must be suspended, if not sent home for good.
37. The Head Master should ensure that no Tuition is initiated unless the Master concerned recommends to the student that such assistance is required and the Parent's consent is obtained previously. It is recommended that Tuition should be given by a teacher other than the teacher who recommends same.
38. Any student who falls short of the required basic standards in class work must be requested to be removed from the school by the Parent if it is also found that the student is not having any interest in studies.
39. An End of Term Report giving not only marks scored at Tests and End of Term Exams but also Comments of the Head Master, House Master, Teachers teaching each subject and Masters in Charge of Sports & Games participated in together with their Height and Weight and the General Health at the Beginning and End of Term must be given to each student preferably on the last day of every term.

40. A Complete inventory of all movable property of the College must be taken. This must be checked annually. Some person/s must be held responsible for these movables. All gifts and donations received whether in cash or kind from Old Boys and Well wishers must be entered and recorded in a Register meant for that purpose and retained by the Headmaster.
41. The Head Master should visit Class Rooms, Dorms, Staff Quarters, Library, Dining Hall, Pantry, Kitchen, all areas where Sports and Games take place, the Chapel, Bakery, Canteen and Co-op and the Farm and ensure that all these buildings are properly maintained, and cleaned by means of Rosters etc; make a note of all repairs required to be done so that they could be attended on a priority basis as and when finances permit or donations are received. Unoccupied rooms must be put to the best use. Staff must be asked to maintain premises they occupy in a presentable manner.
42. A complete survey must be done of all College land and property, so that any future encroachments can be resisted effectively. When funds are available the entire campus must be fenced.
43. Maximum use must be made of all unoccupied rooms and areas for the various activities of the School.
44. Proper entries must be made in the Source Documents and in Registers and where all charges for Invoicing of fees is done. Invoicing must be on a regular pattern, date, form etc. Harsh measures where fees are concerned must be avoided. Tact to be used in collecting fees. School fees should include fees for games, sports etc.,.
45. The Head Master must be informed before the end of each working day of the days cash/ cheque collection by way of school fees and farm sales and he must have on his table the bank deposit slip which reflects the total collections (unless post dated cheques are accepted). He must also have with him the days bank balance with details of payments made out.
46. The Head Master should not append his signature on any cheque unless all the supporting documents and vouchers/ invoices are available. When he has any doubt he could always check with the other signatory who will be a very senior master of over 20 years experience.
47. Hasty decisions must be avoided in banking matters. College was paying 24% interest to the Hatton National Bank on overdraft facilities. The OBA was successful in having the rate of interest reduced to 8%. There are so many old boys in good and influential position who may be able to help. The Headmaster should attend to these matters and keep the OBA informed so that College may be benefited. It must be mentioned that even the Fixed Deposits containing the monies belonging to the Dr.R L Hayman and Fr.A J Foster Scholarships Funds were saved in the nick of time by the wise decision of the new Ex-Co in uplifting

- same from Pramuka Bank. Personal relationships may not be the wisest of yardsticks in investment matters. Every effort must be made to invest the Admission fees in Fixed Deposits and build up this Asset.
48. The Head Master should have in his personal custody all personal files of employees and any other papers of a confidential nature, under lock and key. Vital records relating to members of the staff or students must be kept in designated area and only authorized personnel permitted access to them. File relating to disputes College has with Current or Ex-Employees should also be under lock and key. Instructions in these matters to the Lawyers must be given by the Head Master.
 49. The Head Master should not permit any employee to barge in to his room when he is at a discussion with another person. This is something we observed happening under previous Headmasters. The office staff should be told to tap or inquire from him on the phone and then come in.
 50. The Head Master should recruit a loyal person as his Secretary or transfer from the present position if a suitable candidate is available. Until he recruits his secretary he should be careful in dealing with the existing staff.
 51. All cash or cheques received must be entered in the Rough Cash Book the same day. Depending on the time of receipt, it must be Banked the same day and the Receipt prepared and issued the same day.
 52. Recruitment of staff should be done more carefully. Every effort must be made to ensure all new recruits are resident on the campus, good in English and able to engage themselves in one or more sports activities after school. The current standard of staff available is woefully inadequate.
 53. Close relatives or members of the family should not be recruited.
 54. Request all employees i.e. Academic, Non Academic and Minor Staff ,Permanent or on Contract / Temporary to perfect a Data Sheet including a detailed list of duties performed whether obligatory or on a voluntary basis and what additional allowances if any are being received therefor.
 55. Assess the above information and decide which of the above employees need to be retained having regard to the present needs of the College and make the best use of the available staff.
 56. The redundant could be discontinued if they are Temporary or when their contracts come to an end (after giving notice where due).To consult available Legal Counsel which will be free of charge. The current ratio of 3:1 between students and employees is far too excessive.

57. Staff duties to be re-allocated so that the optimum use is made of the staff who are dedicated , loyal, and required.
58. Accordingly, some portion of the Salaries and Additional Allowances now paid can be eliminated.
59. Henceforth endeavour not to pay additional allowances to new members of the staff, or current members when additional duties are allocated and thereby eliminate this vice.
60. In re-allocating duties and re-assessing the contribution made towards College and its students give any promotions , increments, and permanency to those deserving. Make the staff feel they are appreciated, and make necessary adjustments where inappropriate duties have been assigned.
61. Vacancies of importance i.e. Keble Matron, English Teachers should be advertised and filled early with competent persons.
62. Employing relatives of employees should be avoided and discouraged.
63. Have regular academic staff meetings and assess the quality of studies as well as requirements in that field. Give a hearing to all members of the tutorial staff at these meetings, look in to suggestions and complaints and take prompt corrective steps.
64. Summon the most senior members of the tutorial staff in the Senior and Middle School and have a confidential discussion permitting them to be very frank and open about any and all matters they wish to comment on for the betterment of the College. They are the educated senior and experienced lot on the campus. (Not those handling Accounts or Administration in the general office) It will be found that they can make a very valuable contribution by way of advise and suggestions they will give and they will even be willing to do additional duties to benefit the students. All this time they have been sidelined and marginalized. The Head Master whilst making them feel a valuable part of the organization must retain all power and show he means to retain effective control and can take firm decisions, delegating power once the assessment is done and where appropriate only. Continue these discussions on a regular basis and permit them to meet the Head Master at any time they wish to . Make them feel that they play the most important part in the development of the student and it will be found that their cooperation for the improvement and the development of the College will flow naturally.
65. The abundance of good will amongst the tutorial staff towards the College and students is being wasted and untapped. Progressively bring in more members of the tutorial staff and gradually eliminate destructive elements from the decision making process.

66. The Head Master should regularly inspect all areas on the Campus which are supposed to be swept and cleaned by the minor staff including the Dorms toilets, classrooms , Laboratory, library , dining hall, pantry, kitchen and the gardens, including the swimming bath to ascertain whether the minor staff are performing their duties. A roster may be introduced. Labourers should not be supervised by a promoted Labourer.
67. If it is found by the Head Master that any employee is not performing as expected a final warning must be given and thereafter appropriate disciplinary action taken. In these matters he must seek proper legal counsel which must be readily made available to him even from Colombo.
68. Have separate meetings with all the minor staff and permit anybody to voice their feelings. Their fears regarding Provident Fund contributions and remittances must be allayed. Statements sent by the authorities should be distributed to them.
69. It is abundantly clear that the minor staff is heavily over loaded. The number has to be brought down progressively. It is observed that whoever was responsible for recent recruitments has gone to town and made all of them permanent.
70. Where additional allowances/overtime is being filched those avenues must be blocked effectively and the work executed in other ways.
71. Salaries of all employees together with all allowances must be paid on the due date without any harassment and delay. Provident Fund and Pension remittances must be made regularly.
72. No Overtime work should be performed unless it relates to work which cannot be completed during normal working hours and it is essential and urgent to perform it after hours and before the commencement of work on the following day. The employee should not have the discretion to decide when to do overtime work.
73. The Head Master should have total control and authority over all the Non Academic Staff. This will include all persons working in the Administration and Accounts Department. The Administration can function under the new Accountant cum Administration Officer to be recruited. Over Staffing should be gradually eliminated.
74. The office of the Accountant and Administration Officer should have been amalgamated much earlier. Now that it has been done, a wise selection should be made. An Accountant had been selected who was thwarting and sabotaging the activities of the OBA. Before his mission could be completed, he left and not under happy circumstances. Similarly, although the OBA clamoured and had the office of Administration Officer created and agreed to pay 50% of his

- remuneration, the OBA had no hand in his selection. The Administration Officer thus selected too was sent home prematurely under cloudy circumstances.
75. The Head Master must have a personal rapport with the parents. The Accountant and his Staff and the Administration Staff, should not play any role of importance with the parents.
 76. Parents and visitors should not be allowed free access to all parts of the School unless authorised by the Head Master.
 77. Separate Visitors Rooms must be provided for parents to meet students in the Primary and the Senior School. Parents walking around or sleeping in the nights in the Dorms and consuming food in the Dining Halls etc, should be strictly prohibited.
 78. If any parent, particularly mothers, wish to meet any master who is teaching a particular subject or in charge of any particular activity, this meeting must be had in the Staff Room or Visitor's Room or in another suitable area set apart for this purpose. Mothers should not be permitted to visit masters in Bachelors quarters on the pretext of discussing student activities.
 79. Female members of the staff who are living alone in quarters on the campus should not be permitted to entertain males or masters in their quarters.
 80. A pool of old boys volunteers could be formed who are willing to visit Gurutalawa for short stints as relief/remedial masters and involve themselves completely in academic and sports activities, resident on the campus and enforcing strict discipline. There may be old boys of every vintage willing to do their part on a voluntary/ honorary basis. The OBA could be requested to try to set up a pool of Old Boys who would be willing on a voluntary and honorary capacity on a rotation basis to do remedial work at Gurutalawa.
 81. The Parent/Teacher Association may be galvanized to join in school development work and also to participate in remedial work for the students.
 82. The Head Master should visit the library when students are doing any reading and check on the reading material, reference and lending areas. Days/times when Library is to be kept open should be adjusted.
 83. The intervals of the employees should also be staggered so that areas like the library could be kept open for the students and there is no conflict.
 84. If the Campus is to be utilized for any other purpose during the holidays it is the Head Master who should decide and permit it only if a responsible member of the staff is available in his absence. The expenditure of these camps must be closely

monitored. Staff handling administration should not be permitted to appropriate the monies collected during camps as incentives and allowances etc.

85. Only drivers should be permitted to drive the vehicles. A close check must be kept on their use outside College premises.
86. The furniture in the class rooms need replacement. For this purpose too monies taken for the Building fund could be utilized.
87. Members of the minor staff should not be promoted as Supervisors of minor staff under normal circumstances.
88. Security must be strengthened in sensitive areas. The Head Master must improve his personal security if he is intending to act firm. Endeavour to install a system of communication with far ends of the Campus.
89. The Head Master should visit the Sick Room which should be kept open during a specified hour in the evenings and at other times, only for emergencies.

30. Conclusion

It would not be fair on the basis of an Interim Plan to ask old boys for financial assistance merely because as the Headmaster reports “the Overdraft of Rs.3.0 Million at Seylan Bank is almost utilized”, without genuinely and sincerely having a cogent and viable long term vision or plan. It was not so long ago that a Headmaster made a “request” whilst presiding at an Ex-Co Meeting of the OBA to apportion funds collected at the Dinner Dance towards clearing up the Overdraft balance. After all, for the last decade or so only day to day and short term plans have been implemented and Old Boys have co-operated under protest. We wonder what the rate of interest at this Bank on the Overdraft must be the OBA having negotiated successfully for a reduction from 24% to 8% at the Hatton National Bank. Headmasters have been pre occupied mostly with the problem of having to balance the monthly budget and this problem has weighed heavily on them. This exercise has gone on during the last decade ad nauseam. In fact, most old boys are not willing to be a party to this mockery as is evident from what has transpired during the last decade or so. This is one reason why the OBA has lost its credibility. To accept an offer of Rs.250,000/- from an old boy in order to re-do the tennis court and revive tennis in a situation where students cannot find the means to buy a pair of swimming trunks, let alone tennis equipment, is foolhardy. College does not have sufficient “Petty Cash” available to buy the alum or diesel required to maintain the pool which was unfit for use until the Old Boys stepped in. This tennis court, let it not be forgotten, was the happy hunting ground of a previous Accountant of the College who learnt to drive in the College van on the tennis court and when reported, received a friendly pat on his back from the Manager and advised “please don’t do it again”.

- 31. Appeals have been made by the Headmaster at the last AGM on February 26th. On the same day the new Senior Vice President too appealed to the few Old Boys present for funds. In fact since February 2003 this is what the OBA has been doing, if not for College, then for the Farm. Their own observations with regard to the response and the disappointment is quite apparent when one reads the Newsletters or browse the website. Perhaps the vast majority of old boys and well-wishers do not have much faith that College can be restored to some acceptable standard. The OBA too appears to have lost its credibility by lending its support for a lost cause without exerting more pressure on the Board.**
- 32. In the event of a closure of the school, the first matter for consideration would be the continued education of the students. Perhaps S.Thomas College at – Bandarawela may be prevailed upon to take the current roll of students and see them through. Suitable arrangements may have to be made for the boarders. The parents agreement would have to be obtained after discussion. The second matter would be the question of adequate compensation for the employees- almost 100 of them. Those on annual contract could be continued at Bandarawela until the expiry of the year. Those on the permanent staff would have to be paid compensation. This may be approximately Rs.45 million. Some assets of the College may have to be disposed of. How this will reflect on the gift given to College by its Benefactors is another matter.**

These then are matters which require careful consideration by those who are interested in the future. For this purpose all old boys and well wishers must be invited to contribute with ideas and proposals which the Board and perhaps a Special Committee to be appointed could study. There is no purpose as an Interim measure passing the hat round in order to pay the salaries of the staff/employees or clear the overdraft and reduce interest payments to the Bank, without even at this late stage exploring the possibility of saving College for the future.

Lakshman Jayatilaka
Colombo
March 23, 2005.