

NEWSLETTER 6

HIGHLIGHTS

THE COLLEGE

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. Even girls who apply will be taken to the Primary Section and allowed to continue up to Ordinary Level. They do extremely well in work and carry away many prizes, but do not participate in any extra curricular activities and are not afforded any facilities for Sports. Visiting mothers sleep with their sons in the Primary Section Dormitories. These children of 5 years or so are expected to consume the same food prepared in the main kitchen for all adults. Proper alternate lighting has not been provided for these young children during power cut hours. Teachers were providing same at their expense. The co-op stores were reported not to have any candles. Several dogs have made the Dining Hall their home. Parents bring rice parcels and have access to the Dining Hall to consume same. Parents are found within Dormitories visiting children. Parents are accommodated in the sick-room to give moral support while students sit the Ordinary Level Exam. Couples who are not parents of the same child had made use of these opportunities. Despite employment of two drivers for the college vans they were driven regularly for normal college errands by Accounts staff. The Vans were used for personal errands of such staff and misused on the basis of errands to purchase vegetables. During holidays in the absence of the Head Master the vans were used to learn driving on the Tennis Court; the Campus was given out to Garment Factory girls for camps; the Head Master's Bungalow was made available for partying to Police Officers and Garment Factory Officers. Farm animals have been sold and proceeds not credited. Farm and College property, eg. Deep Freezers, Bicycles, and Vehicles were retained by office staff in their homes. Beds and other items of furniture were removed out of the Campus by office staff. Beds taken to the grounds for the "First Aid Post" during Sports Meets find their way in to the adjoining villages. Building materials brought to the campus by way of donations or otherwise find their way out of the campus. Boarders who pay for food have almost all their meals from the Canteen on Standing Orders placed by Parents. Students take short cuts across areas normally "out of

bounds “. Cattle, dogs, and cats are permitted to graze and loiter in areas of unprotected wells. Discarded footwear , soiled garments, animal dung and other refuse, float in wells , supplying water. Senior students tie pieces of cloth to their taps in toilets and washing areas to filter worms coming through. Non availability of proper electricity and water to staff quarters despite deductions being made on that score from their salaries. Failure to attend to basic urgent and essential maintenance and repairs of Staff Quarters. Students leave the college campus during the lunch interval to purchase and consume food from boutiques at the 6th Mile Post. Senior school leavers are reported to pile up and make a bon fire of their mattresses on their last night in school. Stones, Bricks, Broken glass and other objects are stuffed in to toilet commodes by school leavers that night as a mark of protest against a non caring College. The doors of Dormitories of younger students are forced open by Seniors staying on for their O’Level, and their cupboards, and suitcases are broken open and personal belongings like clothes removed. Windows are forced open and students break out of the Campus in the night and proceed to Welimada Church for Christmas service during O’Levels. Senior Students rag and assault Juniors the day before the latter sit for their O’Levels so that a riot breaks out and the Police are summoned to quell it. According to the last Head Master this was supposed to be a “Tradition”. We know nothing about it. Lack of reading and writing facilities in the dormitories. Harassment of tutorial staff and malicious delay in payment of their salaries on the due date, by Accounts Staff. Failure to deposit cash collections as required. Levying tuition fees and other charges from students when not due. Large scale irregularities in financial controls of the Accounts Department, particularly where purchases are concerned. Entertaining Invoices from “Friendly” suppliers long after alleged date of supply. Paying the same Invoice several times over. Irregular purchases are made of groceries etc. from Welimada and payments are made haphazardly. Not making purchases from the most convenient places and going all the way to Bandarawela. Not being able to purchase items at wholesale prices although purchasing is on a regular basis. Confidential information/ documentation between the Head Master and the Manager of the school being intercepted and leaked out to interested parties, by office staff who are hostile to the Administration and moles operating in close proximity to the Head Master and who have access to the Head Master’s Room. A note in the Fees invoice sent to parents has a warning that boys whose fees are in arrears will be sent home without notice. Instances are reported of boys having been packed off by bus in this manner. Pension and Provident Fund deductions made from salaries of staff not being remitted as required in Law. A computer from the computer room in the new Dining Hall and Administration block which had its soft opening immediately before the last AGM spirited away within weeks and found dumped in a dustbin minus its Hard Disk which contained confidential and sensitive data. The computers were therefore removed elsewhere for security reasons. Monies requisitioned to make purchases of items for sale at the last Thomian Fair have been frittered away without proper accounting. Some of the items for sale never reached Mt. Lavinia. 37 Credit Sales Memo Books of the Farm are not available and are unaccounted.

Minor staff are reported to partake of their meals before students and some times seated at the Staff Dining table. Cooked food is taken out of Campus. This is reported even on the occasion of the Re-Union Dinner. Groceries in fair quantities are surreptitiously removed from the campus daily in small quantities. Employees have found numerous foot paths out of the campus instead of the main gate. The fences around the campus have all been removed. Use of the college grounds have virtually been given up and its present use by college is virtually on an understanding with the villagers. The minor staff are found idling during working hours without attending to their work on a regular basis. Labourers have been promoted to supervise labourers. Currently any student seeking admission is taken in. An undesirable student taken in without verifying his school leaving documentation had on one occasion inculcated the "drug abuse" habit for the first time at Gurutalawa. The previous Head Master was forced to abruptly adjourn staff meetings when the staff had become too hostile. Prefects who are supposed to enforce discipline have been stripped of their duties, en masse. Offensive posters attacking staff members have been displayed in the college hall. Vulgar and indecent comments concerning staff members have been found, and senior students have been sacked for these misdemeanours. It is strongly believed that these were instigated by other staff members. Without Resident Masters in charge of dormitories housed adjacent to the dormitories discipline is difficult to be enforced. The standard of English has hit very low depths. The students come from a completely different social background. There are no Old Boys on the tutorial staff. The quality of the tutorial staff has fallen. Until recently, the minor staff and the administration staff were very undisciplined, took advantage of the weak administration, were virtually running the show, and treating College property as their own. The above ills and short comings are the cumulative result of years of poor management and administration and lack of long term planning. Dr. Hayman served the college for an unbroken period of 20 years. He had a vision. He was alive to the needs and plans for the future. From 1963 to date there have been almost 14 Head Masters. There has been no continuity of policy. Each has had his own agenda and priorities. There have been murders and suicides on the Campus. **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 Head Master.

THE OBA

The OBA as an entity has failed thus far to identify the problems at college and offer solutions. The disorganization of its own affairs is amply documented and demonstrated else where. College has almost 7500 old boys. There were about 75 old boys at the inauguration of the OBA. Yet only about 80 -100 old boys participate in the AGM and Re-Union traditionally held during the 3rd week end of February each year. The Register of Members has over 700 names entered as members. The Register has not been maintained for years. A Mailing list passes off as the Members Register. About 425 names appear as Members in the Mailing List. Even in 1977 & 1978 the Number of Members was 430-440. No action has been taken to initiate a Membership Drive. If one checks the Students who left College in the last 10 years it is not likely that out of 750 or so school leavers even 20 have joined the OBA. More than 50% of the original Membership have been forgotten and abandoned. A deceased member's name is deleted without any trace of membership. **THIS IS RANK DISRESPECT.** Names are entered for the first time without addresses. 305 members in the Register do not have their names in the Mailing List. 45 names in the Mailing List do not appear in the Register. Even members who have served on the Ex-Co don't have their names on the Register or Mailing List. One of them applied for the second time and paid his subscription fee to join up. Another member who had not heard for a long time, through an abundance of caution applied once again, paid his subscription fee for the second time to join hoping that with the revival at least he would be kept informed of activities. Since collection of data sheets for the member's Directory, to our knowledge about 7 members have passed away.

Although the rules provide only for 03 Vice presidents the Ex- Co today has 5 Vice Presidents. Although the Rules provide for 15 other members to the committee the present Ex-Co has 17. A certified copy of the current Rules is not made available even on request. What is available with us is not in keeping with what is being practiced. The remaining members only receive two communications during the year. One regarding the AGM, the other regarding the Fellowship Dinner. Members are not kept informed about the situation at College. This is a cardinal sin. The OBA does not engage in any activities other than what is disclosed above, in the interests of college, its members, and the younger generation of Thomians, as required by the Rules. Several changes need to be made to make the OBA a vibrant organisation. Proposals made by us have not even being acknowledged let alone acted upon or discussed. Senior members who are prevented from travelling to Gurutalawa due to infirmity and old age, old boys resident abroad who are prevented from travelling due to the enormous cost involved, those resident in Sri Lanka who are prevented from travelling due to personal business or professional commitments have no way of voicing their concern, making their presence felt and participating in deliberations and the decision making process, have no means to vote in an Ex- Co of their choice **ALTHOUGH THEY ARE APPROACHED ONLY WHEN FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE REQUIRED. THIS IS CONDUCT UNBECOMING OF THOMIAN TRADITIONS, LET ALONE GENTLEMANLY AND DECENT BEHAVIOUR.** Donations made are not acknowledged promptly. Applications for membership with subscription fees are similarly not acknowledged or intimation sent regarding admission to membership. Buildings already constructed by the OBA how ever well meaning have not been put to their proper use and are virtually abandoned. Continuing to build more buildings is no solution to the financial ills presently faced. Buildings will not bring income. College needs funds to meet its monthly commitments. In order to pay its bills College resorts to Bank borrowings. Interest eats up over 50,000 of its income. When red notices sent to parents have failed to give relief, selected trees are cut and sold. Thus the OBA must be intelligent to guide the Head Master with a proper Management and Administration Committee or a Chief Administrative Officer after discussing various options available. To be considered are the setting up of a specialized Agricultural Section and a Permanent Outward Bound School, with Swimming as a special attraction; Catering to a different segment of society from which the student population could be drawn; employment of competent teaching staff (even from UK); and development of the infrastructure on a staggered 5 year plan; Appealing to all old boys and well wishers of the College in Sri Lanka and abroad to contribute to a permanent fund with Standing Orders; getting the active participation of competent old boys of proven track records in the public, mercantile, commercial and private sectors and **MAKING EVERY BODY FEEL THAT THEY ARE EQUAL PARTICIPANTS IN A WORTHY ENDEAVOUR WILL DEFINITELY BRING FORTH GOOD RESULTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF COLLEGE AND THE OBA. CASTIGATING A MEMBER FOR DARING TO ASK A QUESTION AT THE AGM OR ENACTING A CHARADE OF AN ELECTION BY PROPOSING AND ELECTING EACH OTHER AND RE- ELECTING THE**

SAME TEAM, GIVING UNDERTAKINGS TO THE MEMBERS THAT THEY WOULD BE INFORMED OF URGENT PROJECTS AND MATTERS OF COLLEGE AND FAILING TO DO SO FOR 12 MONTHS, FAILING TO POINT OUT OR COVERING UP THE VERY SERIOUS SITUATION IN COLLEGE FROM THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP, THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND THE BISHOP ARE NOT SINS THAT COULD OR SHOULD BE EASILY FORGIVEN. AFTER ALL WHAT IS HAPPENING IN COLLEGE IS NOT THE CONCERN OF A SELECTED FEW BUT A VERY LARGE AND INTERESTED FAMILY OF CONCERNED OLD BOYS. HOW CAN THEY CONTRIBUTE WHEN THEY ARE IGNORED, UNINFORMED AND ISOLATED?

THE 62 GROUP

We have within a matter of months and weeks brought to light this serious situation. We have also collected an enormous fund of goodwill towards college. Old Boys from all over the world are rallying round college. They have heard our call. We hear their answer. College is now on the internet, through our Web address. The College Song now reverberates across the globe. We have within a matter of months not only harnessed the support of so many old boys who have **DISTANCED** themselves but also enrolled more members than in any one year since its inauguration. Our proposal to the OBA in March to have a Membership Drive and also trace the existing Members who have lost contact was ignored. On our own we have given the Head Master 75 Application forms to be distributed amongst the school leavers of December 2001, and arranging them to join the OBA so that we can strengthen the OBA and College will benefit. The Fellowship Dinner organized by us for our contemporaries has been complemented across the globe. The News Letter put out by us as a souvenir of that event is acclaimed by all who have read it as a Masterpiece. We have shown that the Members Directory, membership cards, and a Register of Members can be drawn up and put in place within 2 weeks. We are in a position to issue even the OBA Directory at any time. We have neutralized a rebellious tutorial staff and kept the college going. We have brought the tutorial staff close to the Head Master and re established better co-ordination and a cordial relationship between the two. We are in a position if need be to show how the entire administration and accounts sections can be operated by one third of its present cadre and make an enormous saving. One solution we are suggesting is for the OBA to be alive to the situation, revive itself and make an effective contribution with ideas and proposals by encouraging all sectors of old boys to participate in its deliberations and submit proposals for consideration of the general membership and special Sub Committees set up for this purpose. We have seen and experienced that the present Ex- Co which has been in office for some time is incapable of this task. **ENOUGH AND MORE STATISTICS, DOCUMENTS,**

EVIDENCE, AND FACTS HAVE BEEN PLACED BEFORE A FAIR NUMBER OF THE MEMBERSHIP BY US WHICH ANY INTELLIGENT THOMIAN SHOULD BE ABLE TO ASSESS AND DIGEST.

In the circumstances the placing in office of an efficient, intelligent, dedicated, Ex-Co is of paramount importance. All old boys including most of the present Ex- Co who are good hearted, generous and well meaning should and must be retained to make their continued contributions towards college through the OBA operating by means of specialised Sub Committees set up for identified subjects and projects. Very senior, pioneer old boys together with the youngest old boys who have any thing to contribute must be drawn in to these committees and made to feel they are participating in a joint effort to revive college and restore it to its former glory. No longer should the OBA give out signals that its controlling body, ie. The Ex-Co is the exclusive privilege of a handful, how ever well meaning they may be.

THE PLACING IN OFFICE OF A NEW TEAM WITH FRESH IDEAS AND GIVING THEM ALSO A CHANCE TO DO WHAT THEY CAN WOULD BE NOTHING BUT FAIR. AFTER ALL WHY SHOULD ANY PERSON WISH TO HANG ON TO OFFICE PARTICULARLY WHEN CRITICISM IS MADE THAT THE OBA IS NOT DOING WHAT IT OUGHT TO FOR COLLEGE? SHOULDN'T THEY STEP ASIDE MAKE WAY AND CO-OPERATE WITH THE NEW TEAM? WOULD NOT THAT BE THE TRUE THOMIAN SPIRIT? WE ASK YOU MOST EARNESTLY AND SINCERELY TO GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE ABOVE AND BE THE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN A JOURNEY ON A NEW PATH BY ATTENDING THE AGM THIS YEAR ON MARCH 02,AT 6.00 P.M AND PUT IN TO OFFICE A TEAM OF OLD BOYS OF WHOM WE CAN ALL BE PROUD.

Some of the contents of this Short Message are divulged only to drive home the point that the entire fabric of College life has ended. Not as they say Colloquially to "Look up and spit". We hope the contents will therefore galvanize you to action and do what you have to do for College.

YOU WILL APPRECIATE WE HAVE PLAYED OUR PART DURING THE LAST 6-8 MONTHS ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY.

Colombo
February 21,2002

For Co-ordinating Secretariat

