



62 GROUP NEWS

February 25, 2002 Newsletter of 62 Group News Letter -07

(A Group of Old Boys of S. Thomas' College Gurutalawa)

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Since the issue of our News Letter No 06 we have been flooded with telephone calls, e-mails and even personal visits from scores of Old Boys of every vintage both members and non members of the OBA even Members of the Ex-Co and those close to it, and the Board of Governors. They have in unison thanked us for keeping them informed of the current situation at College and in the OBA, (although this is the duty of the Ex-Co in which they have miserably failed). They have appreciated our commitment to revive College and the OBA. We acknowledge their approbation with humility. To have convinced such a multitude of Old Boys with the facts and figures given by us and the need for a dialogue is rewarding. We are happy all realize the urgency of taking corrective measures before College folds up for good. These fears have been expressed even by some in our Ex-Co and in the Board of Governors. They are not our hallucinations. Our satisfaction is all the more because a few members of the current Ex-Co and even voices from the Board of Governors have commended us and offered support all the way. We are convinced our assessment of College and the OBA is correct. If not over 200 Old Boys would not have directly and indirectly confirmed with our Secretariat their attendance at this year's AGM and Re- Union. There are over 30 Planters alone who wish to attend.

In this scenario what is surprising is that a few members of the current Ex-Co and a miniscule coterie of their "hangers on" still keep mouthing that incomprehensible appellation that we are a "Breakaway Group" ad nauseam. These acolytes of pseudo Sherlock Holmes deserve a permanent abode in some home reserved for "special persons". We say no more.

We point out factors we have found wrong in College and in the OBA, analyze it and ask that all Old Boys be informed, that we should seek the views and the advise of all. Hey Presto! We become a "Breakaway Group". No constructive criticism is tolerated. Surely we don't need any body's permission to break away or form a rival group. We can do so at any time. We do not need to labour for it. All of us ARE members of our OBA, and we are determined to remain so.

Most schools have old pupils grouping together, generally for purpose of "Fellowship" to help one another and to help their old school. They call themselves most often "Class of -----." (ie. the year they left College) Some times when the Class is too small they extend the Group beyond that particular year, like ourselves. The Newspapers and the Internet carry information of the activities of these Groups. Some schools even have Groups on the basis of the careers and professions the Old Boys are engaged in. Eg. Media, Medical Practitioners, Lawyers, etc.etc. We have in our files proof of all these. This does not make them Rival Groups of their OBAs. In fact it only serves to make the OBA stronger. Judging from the response and reaction that we have generated, any body

can see, the clout we are infusing in to our OBA to deal reasonably with the Board of Governors. Where Guru is concerned we are personally aware of the existence of a few of these groups who although they have not bestowed on themselves “a label”, do meet regularly, mostly for Fellowship. Often these gatherings are to entertain an Old Boy who has returned to the island after a lengthy sojourn abroad. In fact our Fellowship Dinner of November 24th 2001 was originally to felicitate perhaps the most pre eminent among our batch who was in Sri Lanka for a week. During the Organisation, we however decided to go further and felicitate 03 of our Masters who were to our knowledge the only survivors. We also felicitated a founder member of the OBA (who had for some years distanced himself from its activities) with a view to show our appreciation of his contribution and commitment to the College and to gently persuade him to return to the fold. In this endeavour we succeeded. Despite pleading with them for almost one year, some others still refuse to be a part of OBA activities as they have had enough of it, although they continue to help financially. We further felicitated Mr. Bradman Weerakoon who has reached the pinnacle of success of his chosen field. The evening was a grand success. The Organisation of the dinner was meticulous. We also enrolled more members for the OBA. The details are found in our News Letter No. 4 and at our Web site. The fact that the evening was very special, that our batch consisted of a galaxy of individuals has been the envy of some. Now some misinformed individuals had deduced that our Fellowship Dinner was a “meeting” of a “rival OBA” and that an “election” was held at which “office bears” were elected “after taking a vote”. None of these things happened. Almost 60 of our batch mates who attended the function, together with the distinguished guests aforementioned will bear Testimony to this fact. So, how do we convince these doubting Thomases of our true intentions. For them unfortunately Two Swallows make a Summer. If one would take the trouble to read what we have said in our all News Letters posted and uploaded on the Net, our position is as clear as **crystal**. But for those who do not have that faculty “**mud**” is what they see. So why have such people on our Ex-Co. They are a poor reflection on all of us. We have documents to prove it. Reading the minutes of the meetings of the current Ex-Co; the draft Minutes of the last AGM and the Programme of the on coming AGM and Re-Union which we received a few days ago, the note on the “Birth of Guru” appearing in the last Fellowship Dinner Souvenir of our OBA (having only 08 sentences and carrying almost 9 errors) are among few of the Gems, and so one cannot be too disappointed with the alleged drop in the standard of English at Guru today. Our own Ex- Co will be able to give a super performance of how “**English is to be “spoke” and “wrote”**”. **Mind your Language my foot!**

Leaving the IQ Levels and Standard of English alone, there is however one sinister and disturbing feature and we bring it to the notice of all right thinking, intelligent and discerning Old Boys. We are aware that special emissaries have contacted members (who have expressed their total dissatisfaction with the lethargy and the inactivity of the present Ex-Co and who were thoroughly disappointed that solemn undertakings given on the floor of the House at the last AGM have not been kept) and offered them high office in the new Ex-Co to be elected (of which they also wanted to be in the Top Rung) provided their friends would also support these members of the current Ex-Co. They have insisted that they must be returned to office, whilst rewarding one of them with a promotion to the post of Vice Presidency. Of course the emissary got an ear full from the person to whom the “bribe” was offered. I ask you, has our Ex-Co and its cohorts come down to this level? Are these Thomian Traditions, or Culture ? Is this our OBA ? Should

these people be re elected ? Would it surprise any body if even money is offered next time ? Why have they avoided a discussion with us for 12 months ? What have they got to hide? Why have they not responded to our letters since March 2001 ? Cannot they meet our arguments ? What is this cloak and dagger stuff ? Have we stooped so low ? Can we entrust the Ex-Co to them ? Is it a wonder the College is in this perilous position ?

We have repeatedly said **WE are NOT** seeking office. There are so many more competent than even us. Most keep away from the Ex-Co because of persons of the above description. Then what are we clamouring for ? Our campaign has been for a **CAUSE**. The Cause is College. Not for an individual to remain in office for ever to boost his own ego. **The current Ex-Co has not delivered. They must all go. And we say to them in God's name go.** 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. If it is not so elected, why then, we have the satisfaction that we have carried out a relentless campaign for the benefit of College of the nature that has not been witnessed since 1963 galvanising all from the Ex-Co of our OBA right up to the Bishop who is the Chairman of the Board of Governors, but that our message has been ignored.

We have spoken to the Head Master and arranged for our Group and any other concerned Old Boys to join us in a WALKABOUT of the entire Campus from one end to the other, on Saturday, March 02nd 2002 at 9.00 am or so, to talk to all sectors of the residents and see for ourselves the areas where we can help the Head Master to make life at Gurutalawa for the present generation of Thomians, more like what it used to be in our time, ie. in 1962. We have also arranged to have a cordial discussion with the Head Master (who is extremely pleased about our innovative ideas) and explore ways and means of harnessing all our resources towards the development of the College and the betterment of the hundreds of Young Thomians, who we see are not as fortunate as we were. We have requested that some of the Senior Teaching Staff, the Sports Masters and the Farm manager, also join us so that we can learn at first hand the current needs of the different Subjects, Sports and the Farm. Old Boys who are experts in some of these spheres will participate, to learn at first hand the situation. We have taken care that these activities will not hinder the Traditional Cricket Match etc. for which all of us too will gather at the Grounds later on.

We love the school. We care for its current generation of Thomians. Some of our Members will invite the Head Master to recommend to them School Leavers for Management Trainees and other positions in their Establishments. We feel it is essential to commence a dialogue with Senior students so that they will have a sense of security and wean them away from the disruptive behaviour they are presently engaged in.

We will recommend to the Head Master to establish some Interaction, with senior students so that they feel when the time comes for them to go out in to the world there are Old Thomians in every walk of life who could help them.

Finally we ask those who lord it over the OBA not to pose the question as to “what we have done all these years.” This is the same response that infuriated us –The denial of the right of every Old Boy at what ever stage to take an interest in College and in the OBA. **The OBA is not the private property of one man. Nor is College.** 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 any Charlatan who operates a “One Man Show” that there are so many who care about College and the OBA.

Colombo
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For Co-ordinating Secretariat