

Landfills in SL despite world rejection

By Tissa De Silva

The *Sunday Observer* of June 11 reported that the Bureau of Infrastructure Development of the BoI has gone in for investment in waste management. Our inquiries have revealed that the BII with their experts have gone in for another landfill at Madapatha Piliyandala using state funds. We all believed that the function of the BII was to encourage others to invest in infrastructure but in their wisdom they have turned out to be the experts in landfill. The expert is Edmund Jayasinghe (Born again Edmond)

This is the third landfill to be proposed since 1997. Walisara and Alupotha was rejected by the public. Madapatha too was a previous landfill rejected by the people living around it. Only a year back the people stopped the Municipality from dumping garbage. In their rush to find a solution to the dumping of waste at the Ahidiya Bird Sanctuary BII has jumped to Madapatha and given a contract for Rs. 34 m to construct roads etc. to another dump. Already our inspections revealed that the garbage dumped into this disused

quarry a year back has created problems of pollution to the people surrounding it. The chief priest of Shailathalaramaya Rev. Nandarama showed us the damage done to the surroundings. The water from the quarry flows to the beautiful paddy lands surrounding this old temple. Soon these lands will be covered with thick black toxic liquid from the Municipal dump of Moratuwa and Dehiwala Mt. Lavinia. The people are using well water as they have done for hundreds of years. That will have to stop as the ground water will be effected.

BII heads who knew nothing of alternatives to landfill, has devised a new term 'Semi engineered landfill' to fool the people. Jayasinghe was not able to say if the environmental clearance was given by the CEA, or if an Environmental Impact Assessment has been done before giving the contract. As an expert of the BII he says 'No environmental concerns have been expressed'. 'The people cannot be fooled all the time', so said Rev. Nandarama. 'We were told the previous time that their would be no harm to the surroundings, but see the damage and the smoke rising from the burning poly-

thene which is toxic to all of us as well as the birds and other animals'. It is certain that this landfill too would be only on paper like Walisara and Alupotha. In the meantime BII would have spent millions of public funds on consultants and contractors as well as on its own staff. The question asked by many is have they not learned a lesson and stop thinking of landfill and see the alternatives. When the whole world is rejecting landfill due to its impact on future generations as well as those living today our bureaucracy is advising the policy makers on the wrong path to waste management. Why doesn't the BoI keep out of waste management and stick to their mandate and get investors to Sri Lanka.

The BII book keepers at the top should have visited the Wattala bio gas plant on June 6 when Minister Batty Weerakoon commenced the construction of the plant which uses technology developed locally by the National Engineering Research and Development centre. This plant would be able to process all household waste from north of Colombo. BII should have listened to Batty and used local expertise in search of alternatives to landfill, accepted as

the future all over the world for a sustainable planet.

Europe and UK

UK government has introduced a landfill tax of 10 pounds per ton which would rise yearly by one pound to reduce biodegradable waste going to landfills. UK which is behind the rest of Europe in fulfilling its commitments to European Union directive on landfill has embarked on a programme to convert biodegradable material to energy. The landfill directive which came into law in Europe on 16th July 1999 directs all member countries to effectively reduce the bio degradable waste going to landfills in the next few years. Within 15 years it would be reduced to 35 per cent of the biodegradable waste of 1995.

In implementing the Landfill Directive, the UK government will build upon existing statutory guidance on landfill practice by requiring any site receiving biodegradable wastes to collect, treat, and use where possible, landfill gases (including methane). This will help reduce, as far as possible, emissions of methane gas from landfills receiving biodegradable waste from any source.