

Treasury short-circuits CEB

The Island of October 4, reported that the Treasury had taken steps to implement a plan, apparently drawn up by them and extending over a ten year period, to solve the power crisis.

Considering the frequent allegations of unprecedented corruption, mismanagement, negligence and colossal waste and misappropriation of public funds, accusations which must be real when judged by the rapid deterioration of every sector of public activity in the country during the last few years, the latest manipulations by the Treasury come as no surprise. But what seems unbelievable in this instance is the rare courage, unheard of in recent times, displayed by the Chairman of the CEB, who whilst holding office, boldly brought to the attention of the public, both through the press and the TV on which he appeared a day or two before *The Island* report, the serious irregularity, if not illegality, being committed by the Treasury.

The Chairman must be commended for the exemplary step he has dutifully taken, as the head of a statutory authority which has been charged with the responsibility of providing

electricity at a realistic cost, to draw the attention of the public to a matter that is likely to have lasting adverse economic consequences on them. The professionals and particularly the engineers whose counterparts in the CEB have been recently much maligned, should wholeheartedly endorse this initiative and emulate the lead given by him.

The Treasury has so far not denied or refuted the statements made against it and we must presume that they are well founded. Therefore this is a sound case where the CEB, the professionals and the public must commence a campaign to condemn such action and to ensure that it is not repeated.

The CEB must stand together and give a firm warning to the Treasury that unless they call off their project, they will have nothing to do with it and that they must completely handle it on their own along with the BOI or PERC or any other organisation who may have advised them, including the distribution of the power they intend to generate.

The professionals through the OPA must evolve a strategy for supporting professionals employed in the public sector who are faced

with situations where irregularities are taking place around them or are being pressurized to carry out illegal orders, which are against public policy or the public interest. These should include a legal aid scheme to protect the fundamental rights of such professionals who are victimized as a result of resisting such activities and a confidence building arrangement where those faced with such problems and feel marginalized, may confidentially consult another experienced and competent professional, selected from a list drawn up by the OPA, of such professionals who are prepared to do so voluntarily.

The OPA must also consider instituting legal action in the public interest to stop the Treasury from acting on this matter, if the CEB Act or any other legislation prevents them from doing so.

The public must express their resentment to the hijacking of the specialist duties assigned to CEB by law and must go as far as declaring that they prefer to be in the dark than to subscribe to a project which does not have their overall interests at heart.

Reader
Colombo

15th Oct. 2001 *Island*.