

06/07/00 Island

Impending power cut – suggestion for another

This is with reference to a letter published in the *Sunday Island* of June 18 under the above heading. There appears to be some confusion about the period of watts burnt to consume a unit of electricity. A unit is defined as 1000 watts burnt for one hour, 50 a 40 watt bulb has to burn for 25 hours not 1 hour.

A colour TV is rated at about 100 watts and so it will consume a unit in 10 hours usage not 12 units for 4 hours. There is some misunderstanding in the values stated in the letter, it is hoped that LECD will clarify.

However the very salient point in the letter is the hidden motive because in effect, it may be a crisis surcharge to recover the losses CEB will be making to pay for the incentive for the generation of power by the large electricity consumers who have stand by generators.

The lower middle class and the middle class will not be able to deduct their consumption by 20 per cent, unless they put off their power for 20 per cent of the time as due to economic reasons they have to reduce their consumption to the very minimum. I myself has reduced my fridge setting to the minimum and as such store food in the freezer only for five days. These show that the CEB is only interested in obtaining additional funds from consumers for faults of the board.

The board not constructing power projects according to the generation plan for which they are responsible, according to clause 11 (2) (d) of the CEB Act, so why penalize the consumers as if they are at fault. The Board is also armed by clause 14 per cent of the Electricity Act to take over any premises required to carry out their duties.

However, if they were obstructed by very powerful personalities in the construction of any power project, they should have sought

Supreme Court approval and so avoided a national calamity. It will be very interesting to know the per centage of metered consumers consuming 200 units and below who have escaped the penalty. My guess is hardly any body. How will the penalty be imposed on unmetered consumers which it is rumoured that there is a very very large number and CEB may be losing millions of rupees, because they are paying a fixed price and most of them may be even cooking by electricity for which the metered consumes have to pay by means of tariff increases.

This is also the fault of the board for which the consumers have to pay. This meter has been with the board for the last five years or so, which could have been resolved by a radical approach, by going for meters with jewel bearings, good quality meters being available from manufacturers of developing countries, fixing a price and ordering meters according to the capacity of the manufacturers to deliver every quarter.

This type of procedure termed forced contract have been even funded by the Asian Development Bank in LECO and LECO had saved millions of rupees in their construction project as such, it is not a irregular procedure. Meters with jewel bearing had been in use in the CEB some time ago and many of them may

yet be in service.

The CEB has the technical know how to assemble and manufacture meters with jewel bearings and they should have set up a meter assembly plant even before the Transformer Company just by expanding the Meter Testing Laboratory to meet their requirements. The meter testing laboratory in the CEB was set up around 1970 and its function was to dismantle defective meters, service and repair them, calibrate them and put them bad into service, as such assembling new meters would have been just child's play.

I am fully aware of this, as I and another engineer who is yet in the CEB was instrumental in the erection of equipment, commissioning them, and planning the operation of the meter testing laboratory.

It could be observed if the board had carried out its duties we would have had cheaper electricity our industries would have been very competitive and our domestic consumers especially the middle class and the lower middle class would not have had to pay a penalty for commissions and omissions of the board who appear only to be safeguarding their large tax free allowances.

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Opinion