

Energy debate or malicious allegation?

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(Continued From Saturday)

Dr. Carlo states that people who use "Kuppi Lamp" and "Dara Lipa" are very primitive. Then he should know that leaving aside those who are blessed with all the facilities the majority of the people are very primitive without basic facilities. Not only electricity but lacking in foods, clothes, roads, water, toilet facilities, health facilities and all other basic needs. As he is trying to have an elite life style then please pay a visit to the villages in both wet and dry zone see for himself whether the so called development has reached them. According to Ramachandran and Gadgill environmental refugees are people who doesn't have access to any resources. These people have sacrificed everything for the luxury lifestyle (Omnivorous i.e. who has access to all resources) of the city based middle and elite for nothing. If you want environmentally concerned people talk only on behalf of the so called developed people it will never happen.

Dr. Carlo has very good image on the coal power in UK. Can Dr. Carlo assure us that there were no acid rains in the UK as well as in other European countries? Can he say that they now don't look for other sources including clean technologies? To my knowledge the citizen of UK are very concerned about their environment. They may not be as corrupted as our bureaucrats and politicians. Therefore their environmental standards are strictly adhered. I cannot say whether he has any illeffect due to call during his 6 years in UK, but when I saw his article I feel that you have some illnesses which cannot be cured.

We learn that Dr. Carlo wanted a coal power plant at his backyard, because it will definitely ensure a lifetime consultancy for him. But when this proposal came, most of the people in the Negombo and even the Pilots Association contacted us to take some action to protest against this project.

According to Dr. Carlo this will be a Banana republic if they do not meet the 8% energy demand. With the present corruption rate and unsustainable development including establishment of foreign based pollution industries where our resources and the wealth is sacrificed for the multinational industries, power generation will not be an exception either. Therefore we are not only talking about electricity but questioning the development model through our activities.

Only the consultants who do not have any idea of new technologies can say that LNG is not suitable for Sri Lanka. If you can import coal why cannot you import LNG. Now LNG is available in a poor country like Bangladesh and I still feel we should

promote LNG.

The allegation against having protested against Caledonia reservoir is unknown to EFL. We have never taken up such a protest and we do not know whether this project is good or bad since this information was not available to EFL or the general public. But of course we were against UKHP which is going to destroy 8 major waterfalls which is part of our heritage. Can you say our future generations would not want to see those waterfalls?

Dr. Carlo seems to be suffering from hallucinations when he said that EFL is responsible for the establishment of Samanalawewa. There was no proper energy plan when the Mahaweli project was initiated and once it was developed planners thought that they will be able to export electricity to India too. But it never materialised and that was only an illusion on part of the then project planners. Every one knows that Samanalawewa was an ad-hoc decision. The CEB has started listing electricity projects (amply exhibit the electricity planning) very recently.

When Samanalawewa was proposed by Prof. P. W. Withanage, Dr. Kulasinghe said that the site was not suitable for this dam. But because of your dependence and involvement with foreign consultants including the Japanese construction firms insisted on constructing this dam which would leak later. Now only half of the plan electricity can be generated by this plant.

Although we had some reservations against Samanalawewa we did not protest. We never protested against Kukule project. But we participated in the EIA process by sending our comments. Although we never participated in this protest we believe that it was done with reasons. When it was down-graded to 70 MW, we were very pleased. But unfortunately there were several malpractices on the project implementation.

I cannot comment on Moragahakanda but only thing I can state is that most of the people with political backing cut and remove the trees illegally in Moragahakanda an area even without any accepted plan. When it comes to the EIA stage there will be no forest and they are trying to remove all evidence of the important ecosystem.

Although Dr. Carlo is very proud about Victoria dam it was criticised by many because it relocated 45,000 families. Majority of these relocatees became environmental refugees, yet the reservoir cannot be filled due to lack of water. Although this dam building company has experience Victoria was their first arch dam which was an experiment.

I can sense some problem in Dr. Carlo when he justified nullifying environmental laws under emergency law. No person can justify nullifying public rights. Importantly this nullification happened when over 50 families subjected to over

103 dB noise and air pollution in through the whole day. If he was a residence would he enjoyed this situation.

This amply shows how Dr. Carlo is going to misguide public on foreign funds. We never received special funds to fight against any of the power plants or any other development activity. Dr. Carlo should be aware that our effort is genuine and was not for money. Therefore we are not ready to sell our soul for Rupees Dollars and Yens like the so called consultants. The allegation that the US advanced money to environmentalist is a malicious allegation.

However we got an affidavit from Dr. Evans of the University of Harvard on impact of noise on small children and two affidavit from two sympathetic Sri Lankan doctors to whom we are very grateful.

As a result of our case on behalf of the small children in the area 5 children were compensated with 10,000 rupees each but EFL never received a cent from any of these cases. The legal and other cost were met by the ELAC project which provide free legal and scientific support for the public. This facility is available to the public without any discrimination. Dr. Carlo is also welcome to receive this legal support if he requires it.

Therefore I urge Dr. Carlo and those who believe that US Donors send money to environmental organisation to fight against development to clear their minds and I clearly state that we are getting money to work on our mandate and not on their mandate. However there should be eco-terrorists to face the development maniacs but unfortunately still we do not have eco-terrorists. Besides there are several development paradigms in various parts of the world and we are not happy with the present model which is dominated by the Colombo elite and bureaucrats.

Although your reference to India, the Indian Government provide money to the NGO sector and Sri Lanka criticise them while using them as another engine.

Dr. Carlo's opinion indicates his pathetic knowledge of India. Although Nerhu named the dams as temples of god now there is a protest against Narmada Dam and millions of people led by Medha Patkar and Arundathy Roy now submerged under water and water level has risen to their necks. If Nerhu was alive today, he will understand how wrong he was and he will say human is the god in present days. Thousands of people in India die everyday due to malnutrition and there is no food safety in India. People who eat three meals do not know how other people eat. This is why Dr. Carlo say that the electricity is the major need of the people.

As I stated in my earlier articles, we have no objection to coal power plants. But they should be done in a proper manner with due regard to environmental, social concerned. We never had a policy

against coal power plants. We believe that LNG is much better than the coal but I again reiterate that an energy policy and an energy plan should be prepared before such projects. But we are against UHKP which is very destructive. If you want to destroy those eight water falls you should have a referendum as they are owned by the public of Sri Lanka. If majority want to destroy these water falls for 150 MW power plant we abide by that decision.

Dr. Carlo can ascertain from the public who receive our support, how hard and genuinely we helped them. We have no doubt thousands of people bless EFL for helping them directly and indirectly. We are not coming under the category of "so called" NGOs which look after themselves.

So before misguiding the public on the activities of environmental movement and Environmental Foundation he can do a proper investigation what they have done so far and on what lines. He can investigate whether the money was misused or used for non public interest activities. Since we have our transparent policy, any member from the public would be entitled to investigate our role. Our vision is justice for nature. Our key goals are fairness, equity, justice and transparency. With this EFL deny all the allegations made by Dr. Carlo Fernando.

Concluded