

COPE will be completely politicised if ministers are summoned-DEW

DEW back after attending a Leftist conference in  
India also speaks of COPE

# COPE

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➤ Get standing orders changed. But the  
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could be a stumbling block

BY  
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Former minister, COPE chairman and the general secretary of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka D.E.W. Gunasekara was interviewed by the [Daily Mirror](#) on his recent visit to India and the future of COPE. Excerpts of the interview.

**Q We learn that you were in india attending a conference of communist parties. What was its outcome?**

Yes, I was invited by the Communist Party of India (CPI) to participate in a conference devoted to the 90th Anniversary of the Indian Communist movement. There was also a personal request to me from the General Secretary of WCPI comrade S. Sudhakar Reddy. So I had to respond to his request.

**Q Only the cpi?**

No, It was in fact a conference of Asian communists and workers' parties and the CPI. All Left parties in India and Left parties from all regions of Asia except West Asia and the ruling parties of China, Vietnam and Nepal were present. Some banned or proscribed Communist parties in Asia had not been invited.



**Q From the point of view of contemporary politics, what was its significance?**

It was significant from the point of theory as well as practice. Theoretically, a whole range of current global and regional issues and challenges in terms of world developments in general were discussed. For example the current wave of neo-liberalism and its impact on the world community.

Practically, a whole range of current global and regional issues; international terrorism, trends of regional and ethnic fundamentalism; the ongoing global financial crisis; economic melt down and other related matters were discussed. West Asia and the Arab world are in turmoil and its disastrous effects on the world community are immense. New issues such as immigrants and refugees, and their impact on the European continent were the focal issues deliberated in the two-day confab.

*"Get the standing orders changed. This is the only thing I failed to get implemented; I warn them that some will attempt to resist changes in the standing orders. Finally however, the implementing rests with the Executive."*

**Q How relevant were they to sri lanka?**

Firstly, we all are 'internationalists'. So we focused on issues affecting the world community. Secondly they inevitably have an impact on Sri Lanka as well. For instance, climate change, international terrorism, trends in religious and fundamentalism have already made an impact on Sri Lanka. How did oil prices suddenly tumble down? From the day Bush announced his much touted 'War on Terrorism' in 2001 – Sep 11, oil prices started fluctuating rapidly and sharply. It declined from 110 Dollars to 37 Dollars per barrel. The main target behind this abrupt decision by the US was Russia and oil producing countries of Latin America and Iran. Already Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela were in trouble. Now the IMF has warned Saudi Arabia of an impending financial crisis.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Syria have been paralysed or destroyed not only in terms in the loss of lives but also by the destruction of their economies. The over-all effects have slowed down world economic growth in the in-flow of global capital (FDI) and world trade. The economic recession (2008 – 2013) has returned with immeasurable negative developments. Of course, the decline of oil prices was an unforeseen wind fall to the UNP – SLEP govt. We benefited in the short-term at the expense of other developing countries. By the way, imagine what would have happened to our economy had there been an upward trend in world oil markets at this juncture when we were in a state of a triple crisis – fiscal, exchange and debt also being experienced right now.

**Q Didn't you focus on inter-government links such as indo-sri lanka relations?**

Not specifically. We generally discussed the South China Sea problem in relation to China and Vietnam. We prevailed upon the two fraternal parties in China and Vietnam to resolve their contradictions in the context of much needed peace and stability in Asia. Then Nepal's new communist administration has been confronted with some disturbing issues in respect of Nepal – India relations. India's Left movement has taken some initiatives that has produced positive results; Indo-Pak relation, Indo – Bangladesh relations, Bangladesh – Pakistan relations too. Those were issues of inter-state relations that were in our deliberations. We diffused possible escalations of tension. With regard to Sri Lanka – India relations they are much better and sounder.

*"West Asia and the Arab world in turmoil and its effects on the global community, new issues involving immigrants and refugees and their impact on European continent were focal issues deliberated in the two-day confab. "*

**Q Any message to the sri lankan left movement?**

Yes, the much needed unity of the Left is the message. In India, today all the Left parties, shedding their ideological differences, are in the process of building unity and solidarity. They tried an experiment in Bihar, as a third force. CP (ML) won 3 seats – a breakaway of CPM, pooling all Left resources, unlike in Sri Lanka there is more unity in the Indian trade union sector. This is the response to the populist Modi's political offensive. External defeats and set-backs are passing phases of a prolonged struggle. Undoubtedly, the collapse of socialism in Europe affected all Left, progressive and radical movements directly. The 21st century Left shall enter history from another door. Political economy is the decisive factor. When objective conditions mature, the subjective factor (the movement) shall resurface. In my view, a very good climate is being created in the developing world. Ideological differences will disappear if you comprehend the world realities.

**Q Beyond politics, as the outgoing chairman how do you view the new cope?**

I am happy that Handunnetti has been elected as the chairman. I am equally happy, that Lasantha Alagiyawanne is the new chairman of COPA (Committee on Public Accounts). Both were my trainees and the most deserving of the lot. In fact, when I met the JVP general secretary along with Handunnetti, I prevailed upon them to secure the chairmanship for the Opposition. My choice was Handunnetti.



### **Q Any advise to your successor?**

They need no guidance or advice. I shall ask them to carry forward from where I left. My only advice is that both chairmen should refrain from politicising the COPE & COPA. Act as judges, resist pressure from any quarter, be fair to the public officials and don't allow ministers to defend their officials at COPE meetings. During my term, I had to caution 3 ministers (all members of COPE). I cleared an accumulation of for over 31 years (1979-2010).

Get standing orders changed. This is the only thing I failed to get implemented. However, I warn that some will resist slight changes in the standing orders. Finally the implementation rests with the Executive. The Executive could be the stumbling block from the point of view of the implementation.

*"Climate change, international terrorism, trends in regional & ethic fundamentalism have already made an impact on Sri Lankan society."*

### **Q What happened to your report on the central bank bond issue?**

Less spoken, the better. I do not want to comment on it; it is nauseating. Let the new chairman tackle it. My report pre-empted the Parliament dissolution. The new chairman knows what really happened; if the 3 absenting members did appear on that day, the report would have been tabled before the dissolution. So, the end result was that the judge became the accused. I kept mum in order to defend the integrity of Parliament.

The PM charged me that he was summoned before the COPE. Standing orders do not permit COPE to summon ministers. Change the standing orders and summon the PM. Let us see whether he would agree to change the standing orders enabling minister to be summoned. In principle, I do accept that position. COPE is part of Parliament. COPE will be completely politicised if ministers are summoned. The PM should be questioned in the House. That is why I did not want to summon the P.M. He was playing politics before the dissolution - a political gimmick.

END

- See more at: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/100959/cope-will-be-completely-politicised-if-ministers-are-summoned-dew#sthash.z4NUA06X.dpuf>