

## LAL JAYAWARDENA

Dr. Lal Jayawardena known to many as an eminent economist passed away on April 8 in Colombo. Those who knew him intimately cannot forget his admirable qualities as a friend or an associate or even as a boss. I was fortunate to be one who had been in all three positions. I came to know him from the time he joined the government service. I was then a research officer and Dr. Gamani Corea, Secretary, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs another world famous economist assigned me along with Dr. Uswatte Aratchi from the Central Bank to work with Lal on a three-year macro-economic framework for development planning. Ever since then Lal has been my principal mentor besides being a close friend. The association enabled me to improve my professional skills and intensify my interest in development planning.

His recommendation helped in obtaining a UN Fellowship that enabled me to complete my Ph. D thesis in Bristol University under the guidance of Prof. J.A.C. Brown, who supervised my work in econometrics earlier at the University of Cambridge (1966-1961). Dr. Lal Jayawardena was an Honorary Fellow of King's College, University of Cambridge where he graduated with a 'double-first' (1956) in the Economic Tripos and obtained his Ph. D in 1963. His backing and assistance during my career in Sri Lanka enabled me to climb the job ladder starting from the position of Deputy Director Planning to Additional Director Economic Affairs, Treasury and finally to Additional Deputy Secretary to the Treasury in 1976. He gave me the support and strength to overcome personal difficulties, especially when my wife was ill and later died in 1976.

All who had worked under him would gladly acknowledge his benevolence and readiness to help them during difficult times. He was unconcerned about a person's ethnic background and social status treating all who worked with him as teammates. He treated with respect all officers regardless of their positions. He was against all forms of discrimination that deprived a fellow citizen the opportunities to advance professionally. Lal's leadership qualities and the zeal he showed while working on domestic socio-economic and regional/international trade issues were matchless.

Dr. Lal Jayawardena was appointed as Secretary to the Treasury during the time of Dr. N.M. Perera was the Minister of Finance. In 1978 he moved to the Foreign Affairs Ministry as adviser. Between 1985 and 1993, he was the first Director of the United Nations University's World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER) in Helsinki Finland. During this period the WIDER Studies in Development Economics comprised a series of 32 publications. He chaired a WIDER study group on Indo-Lanka Economic Cooperation (1983) which outlined a reciprocal preference scheme for promoting trade between the two countries. The report provided the basis for the Bilateral Free Trade Agreement signed by the heads of government of the two nations in 1998. He was a member of the WIDER Study Group (1968-1987) which produced the 'Okita Plan' for the recycling of Japan's surplus to developing countries.

He was also a member of the Advisory Group of Eminent Persons to the Brandt Commission on International Development issues (1978-1981) and Deputy of the Committee of Twenty on the Reform of the International Monetary System (1972-1974). He was one of those responsible for founding the Group of Twenty-Four.

The diplomatic positions held by Dr. Jayawardena include Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to the U.K. concurrently accredited to the Republic of Ireland (1999-2000), Ambassador to Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg and to the European Communities (1978-82). He was also the Deputy Chairman of the National Development Council headed by President Kumaratunga. He was hoping to continue working for the socio-economic advancement of Sri Lanka and was optimistic that the peace talks would lead to lasting peace. Since development and peace are two sides of the same coin he believed both sides would reach a compromise on the political issue.

Lal's demise is a great loss not only to his family but also to many others who had benefited in various ways through his benevolence and guidance. ■

S. Narapalasingam