

*S.Thomas College*  
*Gurutalawa*

Rt.Rev.Duleep De Chickera,  
Lord Bishop of Colombo,  
The Chairman of The Board of Governors of S.Thomas' Colleges,  
368/3A, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,  
Colombo 07

Dear Bishop,

**EXPLANATIONS WITH REGARD TO QUERIES RAISED BY OBA**

Further to your letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> April 2004 I take the opportunity to comment and convey my observations to the considerably long report submitted by the OBA covering almost a period of about 2 ½ years. This report, I believe would have been of immense value had OBA been a little more patient and taken the trouble to consult or confront me before coming to conclusions, prior to been submitted. This would have given them the opportunity to verify with the informants what they had to say to ascertain accuracy and do up a much more accurate and an informative report thus avoiding the hearsay and the vengeance factors, if any.

At a glance it gives me the impression that certain areas of the report had been based on mere hearsay and possibly conveyed with vengeance for some reason or other where the informants and sadly the OBA had failed to ascertain accuracy. Of course, some of the changes are too well known and public knowledge not to warrant denials.

The report itself is classified into General, Recruitments and Remunerations, Meals, Groceries and Bakery, and Miscellaneous. The answers too are furnished in the same order for convenience.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully,  
S.Thomas' College, Gurutalawa.

G C Mendis  
Headmaster  
18.05.2004.

Headmaster – G C Mendis B A M.Ed  
Diploma (Delhi), P G Dip (Edu)

## **GENERAL**

1. Administration Officer works according to duties delegated to him by The Headmaster.
2. Weekly meetings with tutorial staff are held regularly. Officer staff makes representations through their heads whenever some problem crops up or clarification is required which is the normal channel of communication. Weekly assemblies are held where it is compulsory that all students are present. In addition HM is in the habit of meeting students leisurely at the swimming pool which is a regular feature.
3. House system has been adapted.
4. Necessary steps have already been taken and fresh instructions to the effect have been issued.
5. Refer item 3
6. Present senior boarding master is from Mawanella, is present on sight always unless leave is availed of to visit home. The practice followed upto now has been that the dorm masters leave site when OBA celebrations are held as they are of the opinion that their presence would hinder the activities of the get together. Instructions have now been issued that their presence on such days visa must from this point onwards.
7. Not aware of a situation like this until it was brought to my notice by an old boy, for which I am really thankful. Any incidents of this nature from now onwards will be dealt with appropriately.
8. This is far from accurate. Staff members are given the freedom to express themselves.
9. The telephone is located in Secretary's section of the office. The parents speak to him and convey their requirements. He in turn conveys parents requests to the HM., whose instructions are conveyed back to parents by the secretary.
10. Parents are not permitted to stay overnight.
11. The HM will direct the senior supervisor on the preparation of timetable, henceforth will be prepared under HM's guidance.
12. Please see 11
13. This employee was already in service at the time of my takeover, not aware of personal relationships.
14. Takes Year 10 & 11 classes in addition to his work as Keble supervisor.
15. Will ensure senior supervisor does adequate work.

## **STAFF**

1. there is nothing serious in this. Things of this sort happen due to diverse opinions. They die off with time.
2. Not aware of a relationship of this nature. Believe it is mere hearsay. Appointments are made taking welfare of the college into consideration.
3. The appointment is made because of his knowledge and experience in this sphere to guide and help relatively young members of the tutorial staff. He

- had been a teacher at some point of time in his career and also has plenty of experience in training youth whilst in the Army.
4. Fresh instructions have gone out to the security contractor.
  5. Only HM has the authority to issue overriding or contrary instructions.
  6. Matter has been sorted out. There will be no recurrence.
  7. Things of this nature crops up from time to time. Originated due to mere hearsay, I believe.
  8. Has been a practice followed for so many years.
  9. These are the subsidized rates offered to tutorial staff, had been in force for so many years, had been used to make offers somewhat attractive, action will be taken where necessary.
  10. These are their annual increments. Allowances are all approved by College authorities and have been in force for quite sometime.
  11. This is non existent. Contract has been given on contract whilst retaining supervisory rights with the HM.
  12. Compelled to take this step due to lack of enthusiasm on the part of teachers to reside within the campus.
  13. Corrective action taken, those responsible have been taken to task.
  14. Not aware of any incidents of this nature.
  15. Detected by dorm master as well. Confiscated and destroyed. Instructions to the security is to search all baggage, and all detections invariably will be at the entrance.

### **MINOR STAFF**

1. There is supervision by The Food Warden and Duty Master.
2. Responsibility of the officer in charge, taken care of.
3. Had been done a few years ago, believe after a proper evaluation.
4. Lack of funds had prevented improvements to this state of affairs.
5. Minor employees are not permitted to abandon posts and the immediate manager should have taken appropriate action at the time. Land had not been leased as mentioned but given on the understanding that college will take back possession if and when require to ensure no shrub jungle growth takes place and the college will not have to spend in maintenance. Presently vegetables are grown on these lands. The College will take back possession in June. Will ensure no legal claims will be made.

### **DISCIPLINE**

1. being essentially a residential school problems of this nature crop up from time to time. What should be noted is that the college has very little choice in selecting required staff with desired qualifications and preferably with a sports background.

2. This is not very accurate. The boy in question had been helped by a day scholar whose parents run a pharmacy in Gurutalawa. The student is back in the hostel, having forgotten the episode is leading normal hostel life.
3. These things occur from time to time, when caught appropriate action is taken.
4. Six students responsible were sacked from the hostel.
5. Fruit trees in college compound have proved too much of an attraction to the boarders particularly, however, punished when caught.
6. Most children it is no secret are from lower middle class families, authorities are compelled to consider what they could afford.
7. House masters have been given strict instructions.
8. Action taken against culprit, others warned seriously against vandalism. No cases of vandalism reported since.
9. Have taken adequate steps to prevent recurrence.
10. Five numbers each were given to boarders at the time. Since they are of very small value no inventories are generally kept on such items.
11. Getting some kind of police protection hereafter for events of this nature is seriously under consideration.
12. The matter of concern is action of the aggressor and the injury suffered by the other. It is now revealed that the 'weapon' used was a broken bottle. This type of brawls are a common occurrence among students now a days. Rev. Goodchild had spoken to both the aggressor and the victim in whose presence an apology had been made and accepted. Children were warned of serious consequences if ever such indiscipline took place again. No further action.  
Contemplated in view that the students involved will be sitting for the G.C.E (O/L) at the end of the year.
13. 14 & 15. What has been conveyed is not very accurate. I am happy to mention that Rev. Goodchild is back in Gurutalawa.
16. The college at the moment has a student population of 368. Management is concerned about the dwindling numbers and every effort is being made to attract more students.

### **RECRUITMENTS AND REMUNERATION**

1. minor staff retirements are not replaced as a measure adapted for cutting down of staff.
2. Though student population has dropped the number of reports and statements for management purposes, supplies though with reduced quantities, number of vouchers and cheques drawn and visits to bank by staff remain the same. Only the number of bills raised have got reduced. The number of students does not have a direct bearing on the work done in the office, particularly the finance section. However, in 2003 accounts section functioned with one member less than in 2002. Further reduction will affect it s output and was able to make a saving of approximately 10% compared to expenditure in 2002.
3. It is the responsibility of the functional manager to ensure that there are no overlaps of duties as he is the one to decide on the manning levels required for the efficient functioning of the section and to decide on allocation of duties.

Getting the clerks to write duties they perform could be construed as the section being headed by just a figurehead who would be ignorant of the duties the subordinates perform.

4. Mrs.Rasiah was in employment at the time of my take over. Her dismissal without any valid reason might result in yet another case at the labour tribunal or so.
5. This action was taken with the best interest of the college in mind.
6. Keble matron has left and a new matron with requisite qualifications has been offered employment.

### **MEALS, GROCERIES AND BAKERY**

1. Information we have is that the main cause is not food but the prohibitive VAT, though at the time of leaving various excuses are given. Even the tutorial staff and administrative staff consume same food. Funds available compels the college to make adjustments to menus already drawn up. This is unavoidable as our credit purchases will have to fall in line with revenue enabling settlement once a month at least. The supplier is selected by the A.O who is responsible for raising of purchase orders.
2. Purchases are made by the Admin. Officer mostly from Welimada as arranged by an old boy. However, when credit limits or period of credit exceeds conditions agreed due to reasons beyond our control the college has no choice but to buy from other sources.
3. Possible hygienic conditions are maintained.
4. Admis. Officer has been entrusted with the responsibility of supervision of bakery activities.
5. College will ensure that every boarder will have his own fork and spoon. College will have to purchase plates, cups and saucers anew.
6. It is doubted if there is any truth in this story.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

1. For the last over 50 years, from Dr.Hayman's time perhaps one telephone line has been set apart for the exclusive use of the HM.
2. Some members of the OBA tried to restore the facility to no avail due to failure to recollect password.
3. Fulltime carpenter is available onsite. Furniture needing repairs is attended to.
4. Teachers have been requested to report cases of vandalism.
5. Bins have been placed at different points, litter is not thrown about except in a stray case. Every effort is being made to keep Roads, Dorms, Gardens and surrounds clean. Instructions are given by the A.O.
6. Fr.Mervyn Fernando was entertained to lunch by HM. When the program got under way all three pastors were accommodated at HM's bungalow for 4 days.
7. Stray dogs were killed on two occasions last year. It will be repeated this year too.

8. Teachers are appointed as masters in charge and paid allowances for these extra duties. Special Food for those taking part in sports cannot be served for long periods of time as they too have their meals along with other hostellers. However, it is up to the masters in charge to make requests to H M when such needs are felt. Could be considered if costs are not prohibitive.
9. Swimming pool machinery are very old as every one is aware. Recently also a repair was done. Yet, every effort is being made to keep the swimming pool up to the required standard.
10. Noted contents. Will consult when necessary to be decided by A.O in consultation with HM. One case is being handled by Mr. Shantha Dimbulana who himself is an old "Guru" boy.
11. VAT charges have proved to be a deterrent to majority of lower middle class parents who are in majority. Whatever reasons are adduced we presume this to be the main cause for such a large number of students to leave college. Some parents are reluctant to admit due to reasons best known to them only. With all these handicaps it may be mentioned that 8 new entrants have joined the college in early May 2004.
12. Board of Governors made the decision to pay the Govt. recommended increase of Rs.1250/- from 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2004 and no qualifying time limits were placed for granting of same.