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Race, Religion and Economic Opportunity in the University of Ceylon

THE University of Ceylon abides strictly by section 7 of the Ceylon University Ordinance, No. 20 of 1942, which in effect forbids discrimination on the basis of "race, religion or class." With few exceptions all students must pass the University Entrance Examination: and in accordance with Regulations the candidates are distinguished only by numbers. Accordingly, the examiners are quite unaware of the identities of the candidates, of the "races" to which they belong or of the religions which they profess. The distribution of "races" and religions among the students of the University is thus not under the control of the University. It is determined solely by (a) the number of candidates who present themselves for the University Entrance Examination and the standard that they attain; and (b) the ability of students to pass the internal examinations and to provide the necessary funds (with or without assistance from the University, which is given on a strictly non-discriminatory basis) to maintain themselves there. For administrative purposes, in fact, "race" and religion are entirely without interest, and it was not the practice of the Ceylon Medical College to collect the figures. It is, however, the duty of every public body, and above all of a University, to provide any data which may be useful for sociological investigation. It was therefore the practice of the Ceylon University College to collect statistics of "races" and religions, and the figures for 1928 were published in the Report of the University Commission¹. The University has continued the practice and publishes the figures in the Council's annual report². There is no doubt that the figures are of considerable sociological value³. With other published figures (alas! far too few) they enable the structure of society to be analysed and, when they have been continued for a sufficiently long period, they will be an index of social change.

1. SESSIONAL PAPER IV of 1929, p. 52.
2. The (English) University Grants Committee publishes figures relating to "Home Residence," type of school, etc. See also the Report on Higher Education in Malaya (Colonial No. 173, 1939), where details of racial distribution are given: e.g., as to Raffles College, p. 23.
3. The present writer has used them in the section on "Ceylon" in the forthcoming publication *British Dependencies* (Royal Institute of International Affairs). See also speech of Minister for Education, *State Council Debates*, 1944, p. 845.