

## **Voice of Shakthi Thursday 31 August 2000**

The need of the hour in Sri Lanka, anyone would admit, is a free and fair election to select a group of representatives who will have the well-being of the country at heart. But instead, what we hear on the news these days is a full-scale war, not on the battle-fields but on the political front.

Since Parliament was dissolved on August 18, election violence has claimed the lives of four people and injured about 50 up to now. The blame for all these incidents have been laid at the feet of the People's Alliance.

Despite these allegations of murder and intimidation, there does not appear to be any move by PA leaders to rein in the violence. On the contrary, the state-controlled media has been quick to label these incidents as attempts by opposition [parties](#) to bring the PA into disrepute. Former Sports Minister S B Dissanayake even went to the extent of describing one of the victims as a drug addict in an interview with Rupavahini.

Sadly, this is not the first time the People's Alliance have been associated with election violence. From the Provincial Council elections in 1997 to the Presidential election in 1999, the PA's propensity for electoral fraud and strong-arm tactics have been well documented.

Stopping this trend towards thuggery and violence should therefore take foremost priority for people in Sri Lanka. For electing their representatives to Parliament should remain solely in their hands. Giving up this right will only result in the election of those who regard Parliament mainly as a money-making enterprise. Saving the country from the crisis it is facing now would seem to be the least of their problems.

Elections under such circumstances would be a joke. As veteran trade union leader Bala Tampoe said recently, Sri Lankans may be better off doing away with the entire parliamentary system instead. Or, as Karl Marx once put it, Parliament will only end up being a talk shop.