

**In the Parliament**  
**Discussion on the President's Policy statement delivered**  
**on 18/01/2022**  
**at 3 pm on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022**  
**Address by Justice C.V.Wigneswaran M.P.**

Guru Brahma .....

I thank the Chair for giving me this opportunity to take part in this discussion.

Much was expected by way of reconciliatory statements from the President vis- a- vis the Tamils. Only advice we got from him was "Forget your people! Come and join me to do development work".

2022 years ago a person who died on the cross said certain prophetic words-

"Man does not live by bread alone" he said. The President wants us to leave our kith and kin, leave those who voted for us, leave those who are awaiting their freedom from Sinhala hegemony in the North and East, leave those who have lost their lands to Government Departments and the Armed Forces and join him to take bread to our people! He thinks the 3000 years of culture and civilization of the Tamils of the North and East of Sri Lanka could be purchased by bread alone. He thinks if the Tamils are forced to live within an occupied territory, if they are deprived of even the existing feeble political rights, if they are sufficiently terrorized, if they are stifled and starved, the Tamils would sell their birthright to a pot of porridge! Maybe the lack of political experience is showing on His Excellency!

His policy statement has nothing to show that he regrets the past. It has nothing to show he welcomes a reconciliatory future. He enumerates what he has done so far, which have not saved this Country from facing bankruptcy. He has not even a word of thanks for those who have come forward to help the Country at this critical hour. Maybe he felt a word of thanks to anyone other than those of Huaren descent might irk the latter. While the President and his ilk have been terrorizing

the minorities in this Country he seems to be himself terrorized by thoughts of Huaren wrath!

Let me state here and now that the World acknowledges the fact and so too, many educated and concerned Sri Lankans among the Sinhalese, that Sri Lanka faces today the unprecedented state of affairs bordering on the brink of bankruptcy due to the unresolved ethnic problem. Nearly a fifth of the Country's wealth is utilized even today for so-called security and to pamper the Military. The Thirty Years' War was due to the reluctance on the part of our majoritarian leaders to resolve the ethnic problem. But the President refuses to accept that this Country faces an ethnic problem and identifies that the Tamils face an economic problem only. He is like the proverbial cat which closes its eyes and believes the World is in darkness! His inability or refusal to identify the existing ethnic contradictions signals the fact that peace and prosperity would be far-fetched dreams in this Country for many years to come. Even a College student would know that this Country suffers today due to the unresolved ethnic contradictions. But the President believes by giving some economic sops, the Tamil speaking people of the North and East would be satisfied.

If there is an existing political problem the most prudent, positive and scientific way would be to identify the problem, study it closely, find out why it cropped up and find an appropriate solution to it. Our beloved President refuses to identify an existing gigantic ethnic problem staring on his face and seeks a solution to a non-existing ethnic economic problem. In this Country the majority community as well as the minority communities both suffer due to the wrong economic policies pursued by successive governments up to now. The Tamil speaking who are the majority in the North and East suffer as much or more as the Sinhalese and others economically. But they are steadfastly eager for the resolution of their political problem which the President refuses to acknowledge. This does not augur well for the future of this Country.

There is no doubt that from the time of Independence the Tamil speaking People of this Country have been suffering. Land grabbing in the North and East from even before Independence, disenfranchisement of a segment of Tamils who contributed to the prosperity of this Country, foisting of the Sinhala language in areas which had a very miniscule presence of Sinhalese in 1956, militarization of the North when the Tamil speaking people agitated against discriminatory laws, standardization in higher education to prevent Tamils entering higher echelons of education, staging of successive pogroms which killed and maimed many a Tamil including infants brutally killed and women raped which sent their kith and kin abroad seeking better pastures, have all been transgressions committed by successive Sinhala majority governments in terms of the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC). The genocide in Mullivaikal was a continuation of this process.

Still such offences are being perpetrated in the North and East. Land grabbing by Government Departments with help from the Military without conforming to proper land acquisition procedures in terms of the Law, expropriation of Resources of the North and East through agents and hirelings, displacement of Tamils from their areas of traditional occupation and settlement of People from outside the North and East in those areas, depriving our fishermen from earning their livelihood in their traditional areas, holding over 65000 acres of State land in the Northern Province to house a massive Military in the area, are all contrary to the provisions of these two Covenants. Many such activities still continue. Not wanting to recognize all these activities, calling upon us the Representatives of the Tamils to join him in furthering economic activities only go to prove that these high handed activities are certainly going to continue in the North and East. Maybe with renewed vigour and vitality.

I call upon the International Community including India to take note of this state of affairs. The President calling upon the elected representatives of the Tamils to sink their ideological differences to join him in economic activities, raises many suspicions.

Our People have suffered greater economic difficulties in the past during and after the War. Yet none of us relegated our political aspirations a second place and promoted economic regeneration as our primary concern. Even during the past 12 years our People have elected a majority of representatives who stood for their political rights. But not recognizing the aspirations of our people the President has asked us to jettison our political claims and join him in economic activities. In other words he wants us to act contrary to the aspirations of our People.

We know the economic problems of our People. We know where this Country is heading economically due to the wrong economic policies of the past. We are already exhorting our People to work with self -reliance towards self -sufficiency in their needs.

But if the Government genuinely cares for our People and introduces economic projects beneficial to them we would no doubt cooperate with the Government to help implement their projects beneficial to our People. But let not the President believe that any one of us would forget the political aspirations of our people and play ball with him to commit treachery upon our People.

Let me end by saying that the President cannot for long close his eyes with regard to the urgency to bring about reconciliation among the various communities in this Island.

If the President and his government are going to be serious in ushering in a period of peace and reconciliation, first and foremost they should

1. Immediately halt all actions and activities that are being systematically undertaken by the Archaeological department, Forest department and Wild Life department and some other departments with the sole objective of destroying the ethnic and cultural character and demographic composition of the

Northern and Eastern provinces and thereby prevaricate and re – write history.

2. Abrogate the much abused Prevention of Terrorism Act.
3. Free all Tamil speaking political prisoners presently behind bars under the provisions of the draconian PTA.

These are the inescapable pre – requisites for any meaningful reconciliation programme that could precede any constitutional process to draw up a new federal constitution for our 'Democratic Socialist Republic'.

Thank you.

Justice C.V.Wigneswaran  
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