

Response to Media by Northern Province Chief Minister Hon' Justice C.V.Wigneswaran

Question by Press Reporter - Mr. Chief Minister! Your Education Minister has refused to hoist the National Flag. What is your response to that?

Response –

A National flag represents or symbolizes the people of a Country. Citizens may have their own differences *inter se*. Political parties may have their differences. But we must not use such differences of opinion to show disrespect to the people. But I might say I have myself undergone the same political reservations or resentment as the Hon' Education Minister himself has due to the hegemonic attitude of successive Sri Lankan Governments.

Since I participated as a Senior Cadet at Royal in late 1950s at the Independence Day' Parade at Galle Face I did not thereafter attend any Independence Day Celebrations up to date. Though invited every year while I was a Judge I did not participate. My resentment centred around the fact that though the Country received its Independence from the British in 1948 we the Tamils have not received freedom from Sinhala hegemony which was set up post - Independence after the Britishers left.

In 2015 when Hon' Sambandan preferred to show his good will to the Sinhalese by attending that year's Independence Day celebrations I excused myself. Rightly Hon' Mano Ganesan has asked what benefits has Hon' Sambandan achieved due to his goodwill, from the Good Governance Government. I have thus shown my resentment to Sinhala hegemony in my own way.

Nevertheless as Chief Minister I have been hoisting the National Flag and showing my respect to the people. I have also stood at attention when the National Anthem is sung. I openly welcomed the singing of the National Anthem in my mother tongue sometime ago.

Therefore one should realize that our resentment to Sinhala domination from 1948 has taken different forms. Hon' Education Minister has shown his resentment in one way and I have been showing mine in another way.

I do respect the feelings of the Education Minister. But I regret that his resentment has taken a form which is derisive of the people. Hon' Minister could have shown his disappointment to Sinhala hegemony in some other way.

Without giving adequate recognition to the original inhabitants of this Island and their religion our National flag gives undue importance to the Sinhalese and to Buddhism. This is the reason for the resentment of the Hon' Education Minister. After all that is true. The Tamil speaking are the majority community in the North and East and they existed from pre Buddhistic times. Thus the negative feelings of the Hon' Minister are understandable.

I am told in the USA the burning of the National flag is considered as a democratic right of its citizens. They do not take into custody and punish those who indulge in such activities.

Hence I would appeal to Hon' Dr.Sarveswaran to show his resentment to Sinhala majoritarian hegemony in some other way rather than by such refusal to unfurl the National flag. But I do not think his conduct needs any further action on our part.

This is an occasion, God sent, for our Sinhalese brethren to understand the hidden negative feelings among us Tamils embedded in our hearts for so long. We do not

like to hurt our Sinhalese bretheren. But our reservations are nevertheless true and are real.

A Minister in Parliament has asked how powers could be granted to the Northern Province when an Hon' Minister has disregarded the National flag. The Hon' Central Minister should try to understand the reasons for the reaction of an Hon' Minister of the Northern Province. Having committed wrongs which attracted appropriate reactions from those affected, the Sinhala politicians must realize their folly before making such silly statements. Let me explain myself.

Firstly it is ridiculous for the Hon' Minister to believe that it is the Sinhala politicians who have the legal right to grant powers to the Minorities. Such a state of affairs have come to pass in this Island consequent to the Sinhalese politicians deceiving both the British as well as the Tamils during the time of Independence. Having obtained control of the governmental machinery through Territorial Representation, consequent to deception committed on the Tamils the Sinhalese politicians have continued to tighten their strangle hold on the administrative and the political processes to use such position to violently deal with the minorities. The Law does not expect a majority community to discriminate against minorities and help pass Laws congenial to the majority community. In Switzerland they give concessions to minorities not given to the majority community. Here there is open discrimination in education, employment in Government Sector, economic development and in many other fields.

When Tamil Leaders showed their disapproval to the Sinhala Only Act they were thrown into the Beira Lake. Violence started there against minority protests. Keeping the Armed Forces continuously for eight years now in the Northern and Eastern Province is violence. It is done much against our wishes.

So having indulged in violent acts against the Tamils Hon' Minister is trying to pass the blame on to us.

Secondly the Hon' Minister must realize that peaceful demonstration of any sort against something discriminatory is a democratic right. It is the wrongs perpetrated by the Sinhalese Politicians which have made us react to their discriminative actions. If the Hon' Minister says "We shall not grant powers to you if you react against the wrongs perpetrated by us" that is again violence. The Hon' Minister is trying to indulge in violence by making such statements.

Thirdly our Minister must realize that rights and powers are granted in terms of the Law not according to the whims and fancies of violently oriented politicians.

Fourthly the Hon' Minister has the temerity to utter such threats, having been a party to keeping the Armed forces continually for eight years in the North and East since the end of the war. To continue to keep the Tamils of the North and East under bondage seems to be his real intention. That is why he says we will not give powers to the North and East if they protest.

Let the Hon' Minister first try to empathise with our Education Minister; let him realize that the Hon' Education Minister is reacting to what the Sinhalese politicians have earlier done, most of whom had been kinsmen or friends of the Hon' Minister.

If the Hon' Minister continues to utter such threats to us, he must realize he is perpetrating violence. Let not the Hon' Minister pursue nor perpetrate violence.

Justice C.V.Wigneswaran

Chief Minister

Northern Province