

ETHNIC QUESTION AND PRESIDENTIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS

The Lanka Samasamaja Party expresses its perturbation over the recently widely publicised pronouncements of His Excellency the President D.B. Wijetunge on the country's ethnic question. By his expressed positions and attitudes on the ethnic problem, and the situation in the North and the East, he has ruled out the need for a political solution to the problem involved by brazenly denying that such a problem exists.

In his pronouncements the President has gone on to characterise LTTE activity as terrorist and to express his determination to fight it. We are constrained however to point out that the way to fight LTTE terrorism is principally by offering to the Tamil people an adequate political solution to what undeniably is an authentic ethnic problem. The President's utterances in question made in lieu of what he offers as such solution can produce seriously damaging and dangerous results.

Whatever other consequences they may have, these utterances of the president are bound to give rise to a process that will counter the recently reported movement of the Tamil people away from the LTTE. The disenchantment of the Tamil people with the LTTE is surely a new opportunity to try to win the support of the people living in the Northern and Eastern Provinces and generally of minorities for a progressively beneficial settlement of the Ethnic Problem. It is an opportunity for initiating a dialogue between the majority and the minorities. Instead of promoting this process the President has permitted himself to make utterances that can have the effect of sending back to the LTTE those who have been turning away from support for the LTTE.

These utterances, far removed from the announcement of any hope of the realistic formulation of a peaceful settlement of this calamitous problem, can have the result of widening the alienation of each community from others in Sri Lanka, and endangering even more the preservation of the unity and integrity of the peoples and the Island. These utterances if made without due consideration, should be condemned for the irresponsibility that is thus betrayed. The LSSP however is of the view that these express the ruling party's incapacity to evolve a realistic solution to the problem at hand.

A Statement Issued by the Lanka Samasamaja Party