

NDP Call on May Day 2004

The NDP, on the occasion of its May Day rally held at the Jaffna MPCS Hall, issued a leaflet calling on mass organisations to mobilise on May Day to emphasise the demands of the people. The contents are as follows.

The results of the 13th general elections of April 2nd have demonstrated that it was a meaningless exercise. The United People's Freedom Alliance has formed a minority government. Although it may be argued that presidential and parliamentary power being under the same leadership is a favourable feature, the situation is that decisions taken by the JVP will determine the fate of the government. Thus the country faces the prospect of yet another general election.

The MOU and Ceasefire

The MOU and the ceasefire agreement made between the LTTE and the former government led by Ranil Wickramasinghe was one that gave relief not only to the North-East but to the whole country and the people. The President had thus far lent her co-operation to it. We emphatically ask the President and the Prime Minister not to accommodate the position of the JVP, the partner in government, or to submit to pressure from the Hela Urumaya on the matter and thereby breach or abandon the MOU.

Resume the Negotiations

The negotiations initiated by the former government but prolonged and abandoned halfway should be resumed. The draft proposals put forward by the LTTE for an Interim Self Governing Authority should be taken up for discussion. It is the need of today that the two sides should carry forward the negotiations in a spirit of understanding and compromise to bring about an interim administration for the North-East. We assert that, through the realisation of this, it will be possible to move towards a solution based on autonomy with the right to self-determination.

Increase in the Prices of Goods

The prices of essential goods are being increased by the day. As a result, the toiling masses including the workers, peasants, and state and private sector employees are suffering under the unbearable load of the cost of living. The increase in prices is as a consequence of liberalisation and privatisation. The value added tax (VAT) imposed by the previous government has been the cause of the prices of goods. Thus we demand that the new government should remove VAT and control the rise in prices and bring down the prices of essential goods.

Increase the Wages

The last government granted a meagre Rs 1250/- increase in salaries. We demand on this May Day that the United People's Freedom Alliance, which in its election campaign claimed that it cared for the people, should grant a salary increase of Rs 5000/- to state and private sector employees so that they could meet the current cost of living.

Liberalisation and Privatisation

The policies of liberalisation and privatisation introduced by the UNP government and JR Jayawardane have subsequently been adopted by the PA government and Chandrika Kumaratunga. They are, in the manner of a fierce demon, possessing the country and the people in their entirety. Liberalisation and privatisation are part of the imperialist scheme of

globalisation. Under them local production has been killed and the country has been transformed into a hunting ground for foreign multinational companies. Besides, we could see that, under liberalisation and privatisation, the social, educational, health and cultural sectors have suffered decay and degeneration. Thus we demand that the new government should take the necessary steps to put an end to liberalisation and privatisation.

Increase in Foreign Intervention

The US, the West and Japan, on the one hand, and India on the other are vying on an unprecedented scale to tighten their grip on this country. Sri Lanka is being used as the arena for them to further their economic and political interests through global and regional domination. The parliamentary political parties and other organisations are helping this by aligning themselves in one-way or other. These political forces which wax eloquent on national interests and people's interests have, behind the scene, sold out to the US and India to serve as their stooges to deliver their plans. As a result, we witness the intensification of foreign intervention and involvement in the national question. Therefore we urge the new government to reject foreign intervention altogether and arrive at a position in which the problems of our country and our people could be resolved through dialogue among ourselves. We emphasise that it should safeguard the country from being dragged into the US-India rivalry for hegemony.

The New Democratic Party on the Occasion of the revolutionary May Day calls upon the people to carry forward mass movements to emphasise the above important demands and other related day-to-day problems faced by the people.

- ❖ Let us dare to confront the political crises!
- ❖ Let people's struggles surge forward!
- ❖ Let us be firm that the final victory is to the people!

Declaration of the 13th International Communist Seminar

The NDP joined the signatories to the Declaration of the 13th International Communist Seminar, "Strategy and Tactics of the Struggle against the US Global Imperialist War" held in Brussels from 2nd to 4th May 2004, namely the Democratic People's Party of Afghanistan, the Workers' Party of Belgium, the Communist Party of Bulgaria, Partido Comunista de Cuba, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) - Liberation, Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the Socialist Party of Latvia, Mouvement Patriotique pour la Solidarité et le Progrès (MPSP-Haske), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Partido Proletario del Peru, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Juventud Comunista de Asturias, the Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain (PCPE), Partido Comunista de Venezuela, Pôle de Renaissance Communiste en France.

The declaration identified the motives of the US for waging wars of aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq to be related to its strategy for global domination aimed at its imperialist allies as much as against states that it sees as a challenge to imperialism. It hailed the new upsurge in revolutionary struggles taking the forms of movements against globalisation and against wars waged by the US imperialists. At the same time it drew attention to the crisis of capitalism and that of the US in particular and the consequent threat of a new world war initiated by the US, and called for a struggle against such a war for which

the US is already making preparations through military expansion on a large scale across the globe under various pretexts, including its “war against terrorism”. Attention has also been drawn to emerging contradictions between the US and its imperialist rivals in Europe as well as Japan, all of which the US is attempting to undermine economically and militarily in various ways.

Particular attention has been drawn to the defiant roles played by the governments of the DPRK, Cuba and Venezuela and the stand taken by the people of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay in effecting the removal of governments that were subservient to US imperialism.

The Declaration concludes with a call to the workers and peoples of the world:

Workers and peoples of the world, let us unite against US hegemonism!

Workers and peoples of the world, let us unite against the preparations for a new world war!

For the withdrawal of the occupation forces from the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq.

For the dismantling of all US military bases abroad.

For the dissolution of the aggressive NATO pact.

For the withdrawal of the US bases from Korea, for the denuclearisation of the entire Korean peninsula, for the peaceful reunification of Korea.

Stop the US plots to destabilise Cuba, stop the preparations for a military aggression against Cuba.

For the commitment of the nuclear powers never to use nuclear weapons the first. For total nuclear disarmament under the control of the UN General Assembly, starting with the country that possesses the largest number of nuclear weapons, in order to arrive at the complete and simultaneous nuclear disarmament of all nuclear nations.

Support for the anti-imperialist and revolutionary resistance of the peoples of the world.

Solidarity with all democratic and anti-imperialist forces in the United States.

The NDP in the Provincial Council Elections

The NDP decided to field candidates for the Nuwara Eliya District in the Central Province Provincial Council Elections held in July to use the platform to expose the treachery and the bankruptcy of the trade-union based CWC leadership, its rival the Hill Country Peoples Front and other opportunist allied with one or the other of the capitalist parties. The NDP in its call to the voters of Nuwara Eliya summed up its position as follows:

People’s activists who have been carrying forward mass struggles to secure the fundamental rights of the people and to find solutions to day-to-day issues faced by the people are contesting with the candle as their election symbol.

Those elected to the Provincial Council in the past have been supporters of the ruling party or the main opposition party. They and others like them will, if elected, act in the same way in the future. They have participated in the government at the centre and taken turns in collaborating with the two chauvinistic capitalist parties.

They paid scant attention to securing even the smallest of rights that the people were entitled to under the Provincial Council administration.

Thus it is essential that the interests of the people are given pride of place and people’s power is established from the lowest to the highest level. Those who are working to develop the

alternative politics and alternative leadership for the purpose are contesting as an independent group, with the candle as their symbol and seek your support.

The independent group under the leadership of E Thambiah, Attorney at Law, who is the National Organiser of the New Democratic Party also includes, on a broad basis, people's activists outside the party.

The Upper Kotmale Scheme which is likely to be an environmental hazard has serious political implications for the Hill Country Tamil people. Although the Ceylon Workers Congress opposes the scheme, the people are always suspicious that it is capable of Any kind of compromise at any time. The Hill Country People's Front is wiling to lend support to the implementation of the scheme.

Thanks to chauvinist conspiracies, the Pattana Sri Pada College of Education, the only College of Education for the Hill Country Tamils, has not been allowed any peace. This has affected education in the Hill Country. The schools are not allowed to function independently as a result of the excesses of the Provincial Council politicians and officials. Teachers, principals and students are subject to a variety of harassment.

The Tamil people are unable to conduct their day-to-day affairs in Tamil at the Provincial Council.

Since the land on which the plantations are under the authority of the central government, the people in the plantations are unable to benefit from provincial development work.

It is necessary to annul the collective agreement between the estate managements that have denied the workers their rights and certain trade unions.

It is necessary to act in a planned way to defend the identity and the unique characteristics of the Hill Country Tamils and enable them to live as equals with people of other nationalities.

The traditional trade unions and parliamentary political leadership are unable to resolve these problems. And these problems will not be solved by continuing along the same path.

The alternative path is to take the new path of mass struggle. To elect those contesting under the symbol of the candle is an alternative political act.

Vote for the New Democratic Party (Independent Group 2) to

- ❖ stop the disastrous Upper Kotmale Scheme.
- ❖ to safeguard the Sri Pada College of Education
- ❖ to set up an educational system where the schools,
- ❖ principals, teachers and students are free from the trespasses of Provincial Council politicians and officials
- ❖ to implement administration in Tamil in provincial administration
- ❖ to bring estate land under the administration of the Provincial Council

Message for the Media by Comrade E Thambiah, Organising Secretary, NDP:

The People Should Elect an Honest Political Leadership

Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser and leading candidate of the Independent Group 2 in the Nuwara Eliya District, during his campaign address at Dickoya Batalgala, stated that "The people should reject those who hand out items such as cricket bats and balls, musical instruments and trophies to a few people, and proceed to gather the votes of the entire Hill Country Tamil population to make themselves members of the Provincial Council to live a

life of luxury. The people should, instead elect only those who would act in a planned way for the people to get the benefits of development activities and social facilities”.

He further added, “There are no dispensaries in the plantation areas. The hospitals in the townships of the Hill Country lack basic facilities. There are no transport facilities to take patients to urban hospitals. Patients die as a result. However, family planning is being implemented in a planned way through deception of the people.

“Distributing items such as cricket bats and balls, trophies and musical instruments and using that to ask for votes has become a convenient technique of vote gathering by members of the Provincial Council”.

Condemnation of Police Brutality

Police brutality against a peaceful procession of teachers of the Patana Sripada College of Education on 28th May was condemned by a number of social and political organisations and concerned individuals. The NDP, which fully endorsed the struggle of the teachers for a just and early resolution of the crisis at the College and for the early reopening of the College, was an important signatory to the following resolution:

We the undersigned vehemently condemn the use of teargas by the police on the peaceful procession intended to make the public, the officials and the institution concerned aware of the prevailing problems at the Patana Sripada College of Education, and the brutal attack by the police by participants in the procession at the Princess Junction on 28th May 2004.

As the problems in the College were not solved for long and no action was taken against the officers who were alleged to have committed fraud or misappropriated the funds of the College, several teacher trainees protested against the officers concerned. False charges were made against these teacher trainees, with some of them arrested on false charges and cases filed against them, and the College was closed indefinitely. As a result the victimised teacher trainees were compelled to go on a procession to state the problems within the College and expose the culprits.

Under the circumstances, there was no intention on the part of the participants in the procession to create unrest or to breach the peace.

On 28th May 2004, at the Princess Junction, Hatton, the police used teargas on the procession organised by the teacher trainees and brutally attacked the participants. Consequently, many of the participants were injured and ten of them were admitted to the General Hospital, Nuwara Eliya.

The brutal action of the police is a blatant violation of fundamental rights enshrined the constitution; this, especially, is also an act against the freedom of expression of the participants in the procession.

Therefore, we pass the following resolution condemning the police and calling upon Her Excellency the President of Sri Lanka

- 1 to take action against the abuse of power and atrocities of the police who used tear gas on the procession and brutally attacked the participants;
- 2 to inquire into the allegations made against the officials of the College regarding charges of misappropriation of the funds of the College;
- 3 to reopen the College immediately, solve the problems of the teacher trainees, and create a healthy atmosphere for them to continue with their education;

4 to compensate persons injured and affected by the use of tear gas and brutal police attack.

Hatton

2nd June 2004

The National Problem of the Hill Country Tamils Demands Solutions Particular to it

Comrade E Thambiah, Comrade E Thambiah, National Organiser and leading candidate of the Independent Group 2 in the Nuwara Eliya District, during a meeting at Ragala to explain the party policy, stated that, when a solution is found to assure the national aspirations of the Tamils, a solution also needs to be found to assure the national aspirations of another nationality, namely the Hill Country Tamils. He added that the solutions that would ensure the national aspirations of the Hill Country Tamils cannot be accommodated within those that are designed to ensure the national aspirations of the Tamils of the North-East, and that solutions to the problems of the Hill Country Tamils need to be specific to those issues. He added that a common programme is necessary to secure these solutions, and that the Hill Country Tamils while they united in struggle under that programme needed to secure the co-operation of other nationalities, and also that, since it has been proven that the 'so called leaders of the Hill Country Tamils are not suited for that task, it is necessary to develop an alternative leadership.

The essence of the rest of his statement is as follows: The Hill Country Tamils are densely populated in certain areas and are more spread out in several others. Thus the autonomy for them cannot be like the one for the Tamils of the North-East. It is necessary to have autonomous structures that are free from domination by other nationalities while making provision for them to enjoy political equality with other nationalities as well as their fundamental rights.

Although individuals seem to have importance in the political arena, that importance is subject to limitations. In politics, only mass organisations could be of great importance. A programme of action, the appropriate practice and political direction are essential for winning the rights of the Hill Country Tamils.

There is no political rule that prescribes that only organisations that are specific to the Hill Country Tamils can secure their rights or that organisations that function on a countrywide basis cannot. It is possible for a single organisation or a united front to carry forward the struggle of several nationalities. Under such conditions, programmes for winning the rights of each nationality and the relevant practice should be put forward in the spirit of full independence, autonomy and equality.

All Hill Country Tamils and their organisations that could be united under common programme to win the rights of the Hill Country Tamils should be united, and the co-operation of other nationalities and their organisations should be secured. It is not possible to ensure the autonomy of the Hill Country Tamils, subject to domination of or precedence by another nationality.

The political path to win the rights of the Hill Country Tamils cannot be one for making deals and compromises with chauvinism. Politics for winning rights should fundamentally comprise thoughts that are not anti-people, accommodation of differences, and excellent broad-based democratic principles. It should be one that nurtures and defends the progressive cultural features of the Hill Country Tamil people and develops a new culture of equality and common welfare.

Demand for Action Against Racist Violence

A series of incidents resulting from the obstruction of a Tamil three-wheeler driver by the driver and the conductor of a private bus led to violence between an armed gang of Sinhalese led by the bus driver and Hill Country Tamils of the area in Kandapola on 28th April 2004. Inaction by the police when the incident could have been defused without further violence led to the escalation of violence. Police and army shooting killed a Hill Country Tamil and injured another. The police and the army later entered an adjoining estate and their firing killed one more. A curfew was declared for area, and properties of Sinhalese businessmen came under attack during curfew. Police entered tea estates on the following day and fired injuring several. It was reported that besides the two killed, fifteen Hill Country Tamils suffered injury.

Inquiries by the NDP led to the conclusion that inaction by the police led to the eruption of serious violence, and that, following the escalation of violence, the police and the army resorted to shooting without exploring other measures. It was also observed that they were partial to the bus driver and his gang who were attacking the Tamils, and targeted Tamils for their attack.

The NDP has demanded an impartial inquiry into the incident and action against those responsible for inciting the violence and against the members of the police and the army responsible for firing at will. It has also demanded that the question of ethnic bias on the part of the police and the army and charges of the involvement of a government minister should be look into, and that the victims of violence and police and army shooting be duly compensated

The NDP also noted that chauvinistic propaganda in the media and by political parties has been a major factor in heightening ethnic tension in a region where the Hill Country Tamils, for long the victims of bias and hegemony on top of abuse by those in authority, bear animosity towards the Sinhalese, who too have their suspicions about the Hill Country Tamils. The NDP urged that the violence should be taken as a lesson for the future and that a conciliatory approach should be adopted in dealing with the contradictions of such nature between the communities.

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Note: The NDP suspended its May Day rally in Ragala in deference to the two victims of police and army brutality, whose funerals were held on 1st May 2004.]

May Day Press Release

Comrade SK Senthivel, General Secretary of the NDP, to mark the Revolutionary May Day rallies in Jaffna and Ragala, issued the following press release:

The New Democratic Party is to hold May Day rallies in Jaffna and Ragala to emphasise that the ceasefire should be sustained, the memorandum of understanding made between Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe and the LTTE should be upheld, and talks should be continued, starting with the proposal for setting up an interim self-governing authority for returning life in the North-East to normality; that the national question should be found a political solution through negotiations so as to achieve lasting peace; that the prices of essential items should be brought down, and the government should award wage increases state, private and plantation sector workers so that they can meet the rise in cost of living; that all economic activities for imperialist globalisation, including privatisation, should be halted; that the Upper Kotmale scheme should be scrapped; that interference by the US and European imperialism and Indian hegemony should be stopped; and that racialism and religious fundamentalism should be defeated.

In Jaffna

The May Day rally, chaired by Comrade SK Senthivel will be held in the Jaffna MPCS auditorium at 10.00 a.m. on 1st May 2004 and addressed by Comrades K Kathirgamanathan, Northern Regional Secretary, S Thevarajah, K Thanikasalam and S Navaratnam, and by other leaders of the party, and representatives of trade unions and mass organisations.

In Ragala

The May Day rally, chaired by Comrade E Thambiah will be held in Ragala town at 10.00 a.m. on 1st May 2004 and addressed by Comrades S Panneerselvam, Hill Country Regional Secretary, V Mahendran, S Rajendran, S Chandrakumar and several others.

The procession will start at 9.00 a.m. at Ragala Nadukkanakku Bazaar and proceed to Ragala town.

The rally emphasising that the Upper Kotmale scheme should be scrapped, that the system of collective agreement with plantation companies should be annulled, that the plantation workers be granted their wage rise, and that the plantation economy be salvaged from the plantation companies, will also be addressed by leaders of several trade unions and mass organisations.

In a situation in which both presidential rule and parliamentary rule are at a dead end, the path united mass struggle uniting the nationalities and comprising workers, peasants and intellectuals is the best political path. We call upon all of them to join in the May Day rallies of the NDP emphasising the unity of all forces that could be united on the basis of power to the people, autonomy for the nationalities, an independent Sri Lanka and a socialist future.

Protest against the Proposed US Information Section in the Public Library, Jaffna

Comrade SK Senthivel, General secretary of the NDP, wrote the following letter to the Special Commissioner, Jaffna Municipal Council protesting at the reported invitation to the US Embassy in Sri Lanka to set up an information section of the US Embassy in the Public Library, Jaffna.

Dear Sir

US Information Section in the Public Library, Jaffna

We understand from news in the local newspapers that the Advisory Council of the Public Library, Jaffna has sent a request and invitation to the US Embassy in Sri Lanka to establish an information section of the US Embassy in the Public Library, Jaffna. This move could have serious consequences for the northern region and to our people. This move had caused consternation and a sense of shock to all those who care.

The US has become the sole super power in the world and seeks to dominate the entire world. In particular, it is interfering in the Third World. For example, from Afghanistan to Iraq, it is carrying out a direct war of aggression. Even in Sri Lanka, it had been behind 20 years of chauvinistic war. It refuses to acknowledge the right of the Tamil people to self-determination but instead lends support and advise to the chauvinistic ruling classes. The Tamil people know very well that it has openly expressed this position.

To ask for an information section of the embassy of the US with such a record could only be seen as a move hostile to the Tamil people. We like to remind that, as early as 1968, when the American Information Center was established in the Public Library, Jaffna, our party and people expressed their strong opposition.

Further, since the restoration of the Public Library, there was no formal opening of the library. Nor does the library provide a full service. We like to ask why it is that, while things remain to be done and to be organised, there is a hasty offer of provision for the Information Center of the US Embassy to function in the Public Library and a request and invitation to do so. The function of the information section does not merely stops with books and magazines. They also bear the risk of going beyond that to involve political, social and cultural infiltration and activities of military intelligence.

Also, one should keep in mind the plight of the library if, on the basis of accommodation of the Information Center of US Embassy, other big powers ask for room for their information units to function in the Public Library. The Public Library, Jaffna is the common property of the people. We like to state that the people will for no reason tolerate its use as a base for espionage by the hegemonic power that the US is, posing a threat to the people of the world, of Sri Lanka and the Tamil people in particular.

Thus our party strongly condemns the one-sided decision taken by the Advisory Council of the Public Library, Jaffna, chaired by you to set up an information section of the US Embassy in the Library, and requests you to abandon this effort.

Thanking you

Yours truly
SK Senthivel
General Secretary

[Note: Since this letter, the Special Commissioner had denied any plans to set up such an information section. The newspapers have, however, stood by their reports.]