

"FEDERATION AS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEMS

by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike

Mr. Bandaranaike said that it was necessary in the first place to realise the importance of the present time. A revision of the constitution was due in 1928. A satisfactory measure of self-government was expected. It was therefore necessary to think very clearly and realise in its entirety the whole political question. A false step taken, a false proposal made now would be very difficult to retrieve in the future. They all wanted self-government. The question remained what was the measure of self-government they were aiming at.

The moment they began to speak to taking the Government in their hands, then the differences that were laying dormant smouldered forth. If they considered past history they would see that the three communities, the Tamils, the Low Country Sinhalese and the Kandyan Sinhalese had lived for over a thousand years in Ceylon and had not shown any tendency to merge. They preserved their language, their customs, their religion. He would be a very rash man who would pin his faith on the gradual disappearance of those differences.

A centralised form of Government assumed a homogenous whole. He knew no part of the world where a Government was carried on under such conflicting circumstances as would be experienced in Ceylon.

Those would be the troubles if a centralised form of Government was introduced into countries with large communal differences.

In a Federal Government, each federal unit had complete power over themselves. Yet the united and had one or two assemblies to discuss matters affecting the whole country. That was the form of Government in the United States of America. All the self-Governing dominions. Australia, South Africa, Canada had the same system. Switzerland afforded a better example for Ceylon. It was a small country, but three races lived there. French, German and Italians. Yet Switzerland was a country where the federal form of Government was very successful. Each canton managed its own affairs. But questions of foreign affairs, commerce, defence etc., matters about which differences and controversies would be at a minimum were dealt with by the

Federal Assembly. In Ceylon each Province should have complete autonomy. There should be one or two assemblies to deal with the special revenue of the island. **A thousand and one objections could be raised against the system but when the objections were dissipated, he was convinced that some form of Federal Government would be the only solution.** He had not dealt with the smaller communities. For such communities temporary arrangements could be made for special representation. Those temporary arrangements would exist till the fear existed about one community trying to overlord the other. He would suggest the same for the Colombo Tamil seat. The three main divisions in the island were the Kandyan Sinhalese, the Low Country Sinhalese and the Tamils. It was difficult to find a system that would completely satisfy everyone. That was in brief the Federal system. He would be amply satisfied if it was recognised that the problem did exist. If there were a better form of plan he hoped someone would think about it and place it before the people.

Ceylon Morning Leader - Saturday July 17th 1926