

Thonda asked Mrs.B to accept pradha as leader of Tamils – Neville Fernando (1993, December 23). *The Island*.

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Wadduwa Correspondent

Dr. Neville Fernando rebel SLFP MP Kalutara District alleged that CWC Leader S. Thondaman had asked SLFP Leader Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Leader of the Opposition to accept Prabhakaran as the acknow-

ledged leader of the Tamils in an unified North East.

He also pointed out that by this it can be inferred that if Mrs. Bandaranaike agreed to this request of his, Mr. Thondaman was prepared to help put the SLFP into power.

Dr. Fernando said this at a SLFP meeting held in Keselwatta,

Panadura. He explained that he was opposed both to the merger of the North and East, and the acceptance of Prabhakaran as leader of the Tamils. He said that due to political differences the people and politicians were divided and in this situation the day was not far away for Prabhakaran to cap-

ture the country.

At this meeting this rebel SLFP MP revealed that he had been debarred by Mrs. Bandaranaike the SLFP leader from enlisting members to the SLFP branches in Panadura and in deference to her wishes he has desisted from recruiting members to the SLFP branches in Panadura.

# Have Provincial Councils failed?

The Provincial Councils system which came into being in September 1987 as the constitutional scheme designed to resolve the North-East conflict. The idea was first conceived in the minds of the Indian government bureaucracy, and was subsequently imposed on Sri Lanka in the form of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

It became one of the most controversial pieces of legislation ever to be enacted by a Sri Lankan legislature. The controversy grew round the argument that the changes brought about by the constitutional amendment in effect constituted a federal system of government, not substantially different from the Indian federal system, despite the fact that it contained some elements of unitary constitution. The controversy has not yet been resolved, and some eminent constitutional lawyers still maintain that the system of government obtained in this country is in essence a federal system.

The irony is that a system which was primarily meant to resolve the North-East conflict has been roundly condemned and rejected by the perpetrators of the conflict. Besides, it has engulfed the rest of the country also in a conflict situation as shown by the current naked struggle for



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power in the Southern and Central Provincial Councils. Even the Western and North Western Provincial Councils are not altogether free from periodical threats to their existence. The Chief Minister of the crisis ridden Southern Provincial Council is on record as having said that an army of 25,000 of his supporters are solidly behind him to take up the issue if the government tries to sabotage his administration. There was large scale violence culminating in two deaths when the Governor of the Province refused to accept Mr. Amarasiri Dodangoda as the Chief Minister just after the conclusion of the P.C. Elections and it is reported that political tension is running high in and around Galle following the 'abduction' of the Provincial Councillor Francisco. It would thus appear that the Provincial Councils have brought mayhem, murder and abduction to otherwise peaceful

provinces.

Apart from conferring certain privileges and comfortable life style to several hundred members of these Councils, they have failed to achieve anything tangible for the common good of the people as a whole during the first five years of their existence. The second five-year term began with a spate of legal battle and political cut-throatism of the worst possible type at an enormous cost to the tax payer. In the meantime, the Central Government has begun to vest in itself the administration of schools and hospitals coming under the purview of Provincial Councils, thus reducing the powers originally intended for them. In the circumstance, it is fair to conclude that Provincial Councils have failed as an instrument of devolution of power. It also gives rise to the further question whether or not we are enjoying a foretaste of the so-called federal



alternative to the existing constitutional system suggested by some.