

Thursday 6th July 1995 - World Hindu Federation

The World Hindu federation agreed to pass a resolution to write a letter of protest to the Prime Minister of the British Government, John Major following a speech made by Councillor Frank Ward

In that speech he accused the British Government of violating the Human Rights of British Hindus and claimed that the origins of this dispute between the Hindu community and the Government was due to the absence of a written constitution and a bill of rights in addition to the failure of ensuring the legislation was on the statute book that would guarantee the right of freedom of religious worship and practice.

The Federation also decided to support the campaign to encourage their members not to buy British goods in the shops to bring further pressure on the British Government.

Friday 7th July World Hindu Conference

The exhibition of Temple Defence Movement campaign historical information illustrating the struggle being waged by the Hindu community in defending their Temple from closure by Hertsmere Borough Council was displayed in the University centre and was viewed by those who attended the Conference, nearly 6000 in total.

Saturday 8th July

Members of the delegation on behalf of the Temple distributed thousands of cards calling on delegates to the Conference to enter their threat to boycott the purchase of British goods in the shops in the countries that they represented and to take bundles home to fellow citizens to make their protest, all of which would then be sent to the Prime Minister, John Major in effect saying 'No Temple, No Trade'.

Councillor Ward addressed the Conference on the subject of Hinduism and Human Rights.

This speech received a highly favourable response with many delegates applauding the force and thrust of the delivery and his contention on the need for legislation to protect religious freedom.

The Executive of the Conference was also meeting in session discussing the numerous resolutions received from the activities of workshops taking place and agreed to allow Councillor Ward to speak on the subject of Politics and Philosophy.

Councillor Ward in his speech explained how the British had colonised and expanded their Empire by exploiting places like Africa and India and had perpetrated the myth that Great Britain was the 'Mother of Democracy' while replacing their religions with their own God and systematically destroying their cultures and corrupting the values of their societies.

Sunday 9th July World Hindu Conference Rally

The interview given previously by Councillor Ward to the South African Sunday Times with a circulation of nearly one million readers, especially in the province of Natal was published with a photograph on the front page.

Councillor Ward attended the rally held in Chatsworth Stadium which was packed to capacity with over fifty thousand spectators who had all come to hear the speech to be given by the President of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela.

Mr Ward was honoured by the Chairman of the Conference Mr Ranjith Ramnarain with a seat on the platform with President Mandela along with ministers of the Government of National Unity in South Africa and ambassadors and consulates of many African and other countries.

The security was extremely tight and even those on the platform were not allowed to approach the President during the proceedings.

President Mandela during his speech expressed his concern that the new won freedom of African people may be compromised and endangered by factions within the country replacing the former discrimination against black people with prejudice against coloureds and Indians.

Later during the break for lunch, Councillor Ward was introduced to President Mandela and given the opportunity to discuss the closure of Bhaktivedanta Manor.

Councillor Ward explained to the President that he was here in South Africa to attend the Conference on behalf of the Temple defence Movement and that the British Government was acting in concert with the local Council to close the Temple in Letchmore Heath in England.

The President was shocked and in disbelief enquired why would a Government want to close a place of worship? Mr Ward explained that the increasing popularity of this Temple and its proximity to an English village had engendered intolerance, prejudice and racism with the fear of property values but the most significant contribution was the failure of the United Kingdom to have a written constitution, a bill of rights and a law to protect freedom of worship and practice. The President responded to this by saying "all the peoples in the countries must have freedom to worship their religion that is a fundamental right." Councillor Ward then requested that the President write to John Major the Prime Minister of the British Government as he believed that the growing anger of Hindus attending both the World Hindu Federation and the World Hindu Conference would result in a boycott of British goods in shops of countries throughout the world.

Councillor Ward then advised the President that his good friend Neil Kinnock, the former leader of the Labour Party had pledged his support and that of the Labour Party and a future Labour Government to help save the Temple from closure.

The President stated that he was led to believe that Neil Kinnock would be visiting South Africa in the near future and was looking forward to meeting him again. He then enquired into the welfare of Mrs Kinnock and was pleased that she was now more active in European politics as an MEP.

Councillor Ward thanked the President for his interest and told him that he was almost half way through his autobiography, 'The Long Walk to Freedom' and that his inspiration in freeing the Africans from the evil system of Apartheid had lifted the hearts of British Hindus.

Later that day Councillor Ward was invited to speak to those assembled at the rally and gave the following address:-

Speech by Councillor Frank Ward delivered to the World Hindu Conference held in Chatsworth Stadium on Sunday 9th July 1995 of nearly 50,000

Mr Chairman
Reveared Swamis
Brothers and Sisters of the Hindu International Community
Hare Krishna

I am proud and honoured to be here in South Africa attending the World Hindu Conference and fighting on behalf of Bhaktivedanta Manor Hindu Temple in Letchmore Heath, England which the British Government has decided to close because it is too popular and too many Hindus passing through this village to attend devotional services.

During the previous eight and a half years that I have been involved in fighting to save this Temple I have travelled to India, Nepal, Holland and on those occasions I have been asked the same questions time and time again, 'how is this possible in the great Mother of Democracies?'

Mr Chairman, the answer is quite simple. In the United Kingdom we have no written constitution and no bill of rights and much of what we take for granted is simply custom and practice and when this is challenged by the Government we must then seek justice in the Courts. But in the Courts you don't get justice what you get is a decision and the Hindu Community of the United Kingdom have spent over half a million pounds exhausting the judicial process in the British courts and have offered to spend over one million pounds to buy the land and build an access road that will by-pass this village, all of which has been rejected by the Government, the courts and the local council.

The Temple president of Bhaktivedanta Manor, Akhandadhi Das will appear in the Crown Court next month facing charges and fines of up to twenty thousand pounds and possible sequestration of the Temple itself because he allowed Hindus to take Darshan with the Deities on the most holy festival of Janmashtami.

Mr Chairman

This is a violation of Human Rights and I give warning to the British Government that an Englishman's home may be his castle but a Hindu Temple is a spiritual fortress and will not be desecrated or destroyed by scheming racially motivated politicians.

When I stepped off the plane in Johannesburg airport last Monday I picked up a copy of the South Africa Tourist Guide and in that publication it clearly stated that the Government of National Unity with its Constitution and Bill of rights guaranteed provision for freedom of religious worship.

How is it that in a country which has gained its freedom in a matter of a few months compared with the United Kingdom which has been in existence for hundreds of years, that this is possible?

This Mr. Chairman is because in the United Kingdom we don't even have a law to protect the freedom of religious worship and practice.

The Hindu community of the United Kingdom have the right to expect that the British Government has a direct unequivocal responsibility to ensure that every citizen of that country has the freedom of religious worship and practice - that is what is called living in a democracy.

Through this Conference I am appealing to the British Government to think again about this violation of Human Rights and I am appealing to John Major the British Prime Minister and warning him that British Hindus will not accept the imposition of second class citizenship from any Government of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairman

The only alternative to this may be for me to send a fax to the British Prime Minister telling him that unless his Government comes to its senses I will ask President Nelson Mandela to return with me when I leave tomorrow for the United Kingdom and to establish a Hindu National Congress then he can also take British Hindus on a 'short walk to freedom' just like he took their African brothers and sisters.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

Hare Krishna

From Councillor Frank Ward
Durban 10 July